



BUILT TOGETHER!

NEHEMIAH 4:6

**UJIMA: Collective Work and Responsibility in Building
God's Vision**

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2.15.26

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Title: Built Together: Collective Work and Responsibility in Building God's Vision

Sermon Summary: This powerful message draws us into the ancient story of Nehemiah rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, revealing profound truths about collective responsibility and community transformation. Through the principle of Ujima—collective work and responsibility—we discover that while faith may be personal, our responsibility is inherently communal. The text from Nehemiah 4:6 reminds us that 'the people had a mind to work,' and this wasn't just individual effort but coordinated, family-by-family reconstruction where each household repaired the section nearest their home.

Just as Nehemiah couldn't rebuild Jerusalem's walls alone, the Community of Hope vision requires every family to take responsibility for their section of the wall. The message challenges believers to move beyond being spectators and become active builders, using their gifts to strengthen families, educate youth, build economic opportunities, and restore communities. The sermon stresses that God doesn't save individuals just for personal benefit, but to help others and collectively transform communities. Victory comes not through individual heroism but through unified effort where everyone builds their assigned section while guarding the vision against opposition.

What makes this narrative so compelling is its dual emphasis: we must build AND guard simultaneously. The builders held tools in one hand and weapons in the other, teaching us that vision without protection becomes vulnerable. This isn't merely about physical walls but about restoring families, educating youth, strengthening marriages, and creating economic opportunities. The 52-day completion of Jerusalem's walls wasn't accomplished by one hero but by every family taking responsibility for their section. When we apply this to our modern context, we realize that transformation doesn't happen because one person prays harder or works longer—it happens when every family, every member, every generation takes ownership of their assigned section. The challenge before us is clear: What is your section? Where has God positioned you to build? The victory isn't individual; it's collective, and it requires each of us to stop being spectators and become builders of the future we want to see.

Chapters

Chapter 1: Every Family Has a Section of the Wall

We explore the principle of Ujima, which teaches that while faith may be personal, responsibility is communal, and every family must take ownership of their section of the wall.

Chapter 2: Every Worker Must Guard the Vision

Building attracts opposition, so we must work with one hand and hold a weapon in the other, protecting what we are building through vigilance and collective responsibility.

Chapter 3: Every Hand Matters in the Victory

The wall was completed in 52 days because everyone did their part, demonstrating that victory is collective and requires families building, guarding, and finishing together.

Key Points:

- Every family has a section of the wall to build; nobody can build the entire wall alone, but everyone must build their part
- Collective work requires collective vigilance; believers must build with one hand and hold a weapon in the other to guard against opposition
- Building attracts opposition, but families must not stop working when critics and enemies arise
- The Community of Hope vision has six pillars (spiritual, educational, economic, health/wellness, social, and physical/recreational) and every family should build on at least one
- Stewardship is not about money but about protecting and reinforcing what is being built
- Every hand matters in the victory; finishing requires partnership and cooperation
- Personal giftedness must align with communal responsibility for transformation to occur
- LIFE Male STEAM Academy exemplifies collective responsibility in action, addressing the needs of underserved young Black boys
- Protection of the vision is as important as building it; families must guard against complacency, division, and distraction

- Historical context shows that freedom movements and civil rights victories were never solo achievements but collective efforts

Scripture Reference:

- Nehemiah 4:6 (Primary): "So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work"
- Nehemiah 3 (Context): Details of families building their sections of the wall
- Nehemiah 4:9, 13-14: Prayer and posting guards; stationing people by families with weapons
- Nehemiah 6:15: The wall completed in 52 days
- Nehemiah 4:20: "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us"
- Luke 12:48: "For unto whom much is given, much is required"
- Ephesians 4:11-12: Pastors and teachers equip the people for the work of service

Stories:

- The rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls under Nehemiah's leadership, with families each taking responsibility for the section nearest their homes
- LIFE Male STEAM Academy's seven-year journey from vision to operation, demonstrating collective responsibility and community support
- Brother Seymour and Sister Seymour bringing food every Monday to LIFE Male STEAM Academy for boys who have food insecurities at home

- Deacon Harry Smith's financial contribution to support the boys at the academy despite being nearly 89 years old
- Sister Seymour and Brother Seymour providing money for a washer and dryer so the school could wash students' clothes
- Deacon Howard Fuller, close to 90 years old, driving his car around seven times when he couldn't walk, doing his part
- The encounter with the Black male superintendent in Woodland Hills who questioned having Black men work with Black boys
- The Django movie reference illustrating how progress and elevation (the slave on a horse) threatens those who want to maintain the status quo

Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Mentioned References:

1. Nehemiah 4:6 - "So we built the wall and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height. For the people had a mind to work." (Primary text)
2. Nehemiah 3 - Discussion of families repairing sections of the wall near their homes
3. Nehemiah 4:9 - "Prayed to our God... And posted a guard day and night to meet this threat."
4. Nehemiah 4:13-14 - Stationing people behind the wall with weapons, fighting for families
5. Nehemiah 6:15 - "So the wall was completed on the 25th of Elul in 52 days."
6. Luke 12:48 - "For unto whom much is given, much is required." (Pastor's favorite scripture)

7. Ephesians 4:11-12 - God gave pastors and teachers to equip the people for the work of service
8. Nehemiah 4:20 - "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there because our God will fight for us."
9. 1 John 4:4 - "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." (Referenced multiple times)
10. Zechariah 4:6 - "It's not by might, not by power, but by His Spirit."

Song Lyrics/Hymn References (Biblical themes):

11. Matthew 11:12 - "The kingdom suffers violence and the violent take it by force." (Alluded to)
12. Psalm 121 - Theme of God looking beyond faults and seeing needs
13. John 14:19 - "Because He lives" theme

Suggested Related Verses for Main Themes:

Theme: Collective Work and Unity

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 - "Two are better than one"
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 - Body of Christ working together
- Hebrews 10:24-25 - Encouraging one another

Theme: Building and Guarding

- Proverbs 29:18 - "Where there is no vision, the people perish"
- Matthew 7:24-27 - Building on solid foundation
- 1 Peter 5:8 - "Be alert and of sober mind"

Theme: Faith and Family

- Joshua 24:15 - "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"
- Deuteronomy 6:6-7 - Teaching children diligently
- Proverbs 22:6 - "Train up a child in the way he should go"

Theme: Responsibility and Stewardship

- Romans 12:4-8 - Different gifts, one body
- 1 Corinthians 4:2 - Stewards must be found faithful
- Galatians 6:2 - "Bear one another's burdens"

QUOTES:

Faith may be personal, but your responsibility is communal. God didn't just save you so you can walk around and brag about being saved, but God has saved you so that you can help somebody else.

We are not spectators of hope. We are builders of hope. We are not consumers of the vision. We are carriers of the vision.

Nobody built the whole wall by themselves. But everybody built their part. And when everybody builds their part, the Bible says that the walls stand.

The wall did not rise because one man had a vision. No, the wall rose because every family had a section.

They built with one hand and held a weapon in the other. They worked and they watched. They built and they guarded because collective work requires collective vigilance.

Anytime families get stronger, the enemy will resist. Anytime a church grows healthier, the enemy will resist. Anytime a community begins to rise, the enemy will resist.

Faith without vigilance becomes vulnerable. And Ujima teaches us that protection is collective.

You may not build the whole wall yourself, but you must build your section. You may not fix the whole city, but you must fix your part.

Faith may ignite division, but family will sustain the journey. When families stay engaged, walls begin to come up.

If we build together, we will finish together. If we guard together, we will stand together. If we give together, we will grow together.

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5-Day Devotional: Building Together for God's Kingdom

Day 1: Every Family Has a Section

Reading: Nehemiah 3:1-32

Devotional: In Nehemiah's time, the wall didn't rise because of one hero—it rose because every family repaired the section nearest to their home. Goldsmiths, merchants, priests, and families each took responsibility for their part. The same principle applies to us today. God hasn't called you to rebuild everything, but He has called you to build

something. Your section might be your children, your marriage, mentoring youth, serving seniors, or supporting your church's vision. The question isn't whether you can do everything—it's whether you'll do your part. When everyone builds their section, the wall stands. What is God calling you to build today?

Reflection Question: What section of the wall has God placed before you? What keeps burning in your spirit that won't leave you alone?

Day 2: Guard What You Build

Reading: Nehemiah 4:1-23

Devotional: Building attracts opposition. When Nehemiah's people began rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, critics and enemies immediately appeared. But notice what they did—they didn't stop building. Instead, they built with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. They worked and they watched. Faith without vigilance becomes vulnerable. Whatever God is building in your life—whether it's your marriage, your children's future, your ministry, or your personal growth—you must guard it. Guard against gossip, division, complacency, and distraction. The enemy doesn't attack what isn't growing. If you're experiencing resistance, it's often a sign you're building something that matters. Keep building, but stay vigilant.

Reflection Question: What areas of your life need both building and guarding right now?

Day 3: Greater Is He

Reading: 1 John 4:1-4

Devotional: "Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world." This isn't just a nice saying—it's a declaration of victory. God's power is greater than any burden you bear, any enemy that attacks you, any battle you fight, any hardship you endure. He is greater than your deepest fear, your darkest night, your largest storm, and your biggest mess. When you feel overwhelmed by the walls that need rebuilding in your life, remember that you don't build in your own strength. Our God fights for us. The same God who helped Nehemiah's people complete the wall in 52 days is the same God available to you today. His greatness isn't diminished by your circumstances—it's magnified through them.

Reflection Question: What situation in your life needs you to declare "Greater is He" over it today?

Day 4: Collective Work, Collective Victory

Reading: Ephesians 4:11-16

Devotional: The wall was finished not because Nehemiah did it, but because the people did it together. Victory was collective, not individual. God designed the body of Christ to function together—each member contributing their gifts, talents, and resources. You cannot finish certain things by yourself. You may start alone, you may struggle alone, you may pray alone, but finishing requires partnership. Families finish together. Churches thrive when members cooperate. Generations advance when elders and youth align. Faith may ignite the vision, but family sustains the journey. Stop trying to be a solo performer in God's Kingdom work. Find your place in the body and build alongside others.

Reflection Question: Who has God placed in your life to partner with in building His Kingdom?

Day 5: Because He Lives

Reading: Luke 12:48; Romans 8:31-39

Devotional: "For unto whom much is given, much is required." God has blessed you not just for your benefit, but so you can be a blessing to others. The question isn't whether you have enough—it's whether you're faithful with what you've been given. Christ died on the cross, stayed in the grave, but early Sunday morning, He rose with all power. Because He lives, you can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Life is worth living just because He lives. And because He lives in you, you have the power to take your section of the wall. You're not too old, too young, too broken, or too busy. Do your part at your own level. Build for future generations. Long after you're gone, what you build today will matter.

Reflection Question: What legacy are you building for the generations that will come after you?

Closing Prayer: Lord God, thank You for calling me to be a builder in Your kingdom. Help me to identify my section of the wall and give me the courage to build it faithfully. Grant me wisdom to guard what You're building in my life and the humility to work alongside others. I declare that greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world. I will not be a spectator but a builder of hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Small Group Guide: "Built Together" (Ujima - Collective Work and Responsibility)

Based on Nehemiah 4:6 - "So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work."

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by inviting God's presence into your gathering. Ask for open hearts and minds to receive what He wants to teach through this discussion.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: Share a time when you accomplished something significant that you couldn't have done alone. What made the collective effort successful?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. Every Family Has a Section of the Wall

- The wall didn't rise because of one hero; it rose because every family repaired their section

- Building starts at home - families repaired sections nearest to their homes
- Nobody builds the whole wall alone, but everybody must build their part

2. Every Worker Must Guard the Vision

- Building attracts opposition - whenever God's people rise, resistance shows up
- The people built with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other
- We must guard against complacency, division, distraction, and gossip
- Protection is collective, not individual

3. Every Hand Matters in the Victory

- The wall was completed in 52 days because everyone did their part
- Victory is collective, not individual (Ujima in action)
- We build for future generations, not just ourselves
- Faith may be personal, but responsibility is communal

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Finding Your Section (20 minutes)

- 1. Personal Reflection:** What section of the "wall" do you believe God is calling you to build? (Consider: prayer, mentoring, supporting youth, serving seniors, giving, strengthening marriages, etc.)

2. **Honest Assessment:** What has kept you from building your section? Fear? Feeling inadequate? Waiting for someone else to do it?
3. **Scripture Connection:** Read Nehemiah 3:1-32 (summary: different families building different sections). How does it challenge our modern tendency toward individualism?
4. **Application:** The sermon mentioned that "LIFE Male STEAM Academy is not just a school - it is our section of the wall." What are the "walls" in your community that need rebuilding? How can your family or small group take responsibility for one section?

Section 2: Guarding What We Build (20 minutes)

5. **Real Talk:** The sermon mentioned that "a dog that'll bring a bone will carry a bone." How does gossip weaken the walls we're trying to build in our church and community?
6. **Spiritual Warfare:** Nehemiah's workers built with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. What are the "weapons" we need today to guard our families, marriages, and vision? (Consider: prayer, accountability, boundaries, Scripture, etc.)
7. **Unity Discussion:** Pastor Canady said, "Guard against division." What are the biggest threats to unity in the church today? How can we actively guard against them?
8. **Personal Challenge:** What is one value, relationship, or commitment in your life that you need to guard more intentionally?

Section 3: Working Together (20 minutes)

9. **Historical Reflection:** During Black History Month, how does the principle of Ujima (collective work and responsibility) connect to the civil rights movement and our ancestors' survival?

10. **Church Application:** How can we move from being "Monday morning quarterbacks" (critics) to active participants in the Community of Hope vision?
11. **Generational Responsibility:** The sermon emphasized building "for future generations." What legacy are you building for those who come after you?
12. **Practical Action:** Brother Seymour and Sister Seymour bring food every Monday to LIFE Male STEAM Academy. Deacon Harry Smith gave financially. What practical, consistent action can your small group commit to doing together?

Personal Reflection Questions (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes of silence for each person to consider:

- **Where has God positioned me?** (family, workplace, neighborhood, church)
- **What keeps burning in my spirit?** (What issue or need won't leave me alone?)
- **What gifts has God given me?** (teaching, encouragement, hospitality, administration, giving, mercy, etc.)
- **What is my "section of the wall"?**

Practical Applications

Individual Actions:

- [] Complete a spiritual gifts assessment through Rodman's Network Ministry
- [] Identify one specific "section" where you will serve consistently
- [] Stop gossiping or listening to gossip about the church or its leaders
- [] Commit to faithful stewardship (giving) to reinforce the wall
- [] Mentor or support one young person in your sphere of influence

Small Group Actions:

- [] Adopt a specific ministry or need at LIFE Male STEAM Academy
- [] Commit to praying together for the Community of Hope vision weekly
- [] Organize a service project that addresses a community need
- [] Study the six pillars of Community of Hope and determine where your group can serve
- [] Hold each other accountable to "building your section"

Family Actions:

- [] Have a family meeting to discuss "our section of the wall"
- [] Pray together as a family for your church and community
- [] Teach children about collective responsibility and service
- [] Model covenant faithfulness in marriage
- [] Create a family mission statement based on serving others

Scripture for Further Study

- **Nehemiah 3:1-32** - Detailed account of families building their sections
- **Nehemiah 4:1-23** - Building and guarding simultaneously
- **Ephesians 4:11-16** - The body of Christ working together
- **1 Corinthians 12:12-27** - Many parts, one body
- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** - Two are better than one
- **Luke 12:48** - "To whom much is given, much is required"

Closing Activity: Commitment Cards (10 minutes)

Materials needed: Index cards and pens

Have each person write down:

- 1. My section of the wall is:** _____
- 2. I commit to building by:** _____
- 3. I will guard the vision by:** _____
- 4. One person I will invite to build with me:** _____

Exchange cards with an accountability partner in the group who will check in with you in 30 days.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for the Community of Hope vision
- Ask for clarity about each person's section of the wall
- Pray for unity and protection from division
- Ask for strength to build and guard simultaneously
- Commit to working together for future generations

Suggested Prayer: "Lord, help us to have a mind to work. Show each of us our section of the wall. Give us the tools to build and the weapons to guard. Help us to remember that we are stronger together than we are apart. May we build not for ourselves, but for future generations. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Group Leader Notes

Key Themes to Emphasize:

- **Collective responsibility** - No one person can do everything, but everyone can do something
- **Unity** - Guard against gossip, division, and criticism
- **Legacy** - We're building for generations we'll never meet
- **Action** - Move from spectators to participants

Potential Challenges:

- Some may feel overwhelmed by the scope of the vision
- Others may feel their contribution is too small to matter
- Some may struggle with past hurts or disappointments in church

Encouragement for Leaders: Remind the group that Nehemiah's wall was built in 52 days because everyone did their part. Small, consistent contributions from many people create massive change. The goal isn't perfection; it's participation.

Follow-Up for Next Week

Ask group members to come prepared to share:

- One action they took to "build their section"
- One challenge they faced
- One way they saw God working through collective effort

Remember: "Faith may be personal, but responsibility is communal. We build together. We solve together. We carry together. We rise together."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is your specific 'section of the wall' in building up your family, church, or community, and how are you actively working on it right now?
2. How does the principle of Ujima (collective work and responsibility) challenge the American culture of individualism, and what would it look like to live this out in your daily life?
3. In what ways are you both 'building' and 'guarding' simultaneously in your personal life, marriage, or ministry, holding a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other?
4. The sermon emphasizes that 'faith may be personal, but responsibility is communal.' How does this truth challenge or affirm the way you currently practice your faith?
5. What 'Monday morning quarterback' tendencies do you need to confess and replace with actual participation in the work God has called you to do?

6. How does the story of Nehemiah's families each repairing the section nearest their home speak to your responsibility for those closest to you before trying to fix broader problems?
7. What opposition or criticism have you faced when trying to build something for God, and how can you learn from Nehemiah's response to continue building despite resistance?
8. The pastor mentions that 'the enemy does not attack anything that's not growing.' What areas of spiritual attack in your life might actually be indicators that you're growing in the right direction?
9. How does the completion of the wall in 52 days demonstrate the power of collective effort, and what 'impossible' task could your community accomplish if everyone contributed their part?
10. What does it mean practically for you to 'guard your section' against complacency, division, and distraction while also building up what God has entrusted to you?