

“2 do’s and a don’t when God is calling you to rebuild”

Hey everyone, Welcome to week 2 of Comeback.

This year we are in a series called Garden to City where we are going from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation in one year.

Right now we are in the Old Testament book called Nehemiah.

This series from the book of Nehemiah we are calling “comeback” because Nehemiah had an incredible comeback story. He was able in only 52 days to rebuild the wall around the city of Jerusalem. The wall had been broken and burned and was in shambles. God gave Nehemiah a vision, and a passion, to repair it.

With the strength of God, and the gifts God gave him, Nehemiah was able to encourage the right people, at the right time in the right place to do the rebuilding God called them to do.

As Jeff shared last week-We all have a Comeback story

As a staff, we started planning this Nehemiah series months ago- and how we would ask you, our community, to share your comeback stories. I had a lot of time to think about what I wanted my comeback story to be.

Maybe you have put your comeback story on social media. If you have not, why? I know it is hard to even say it out loud ..and even harder to record for others to see.

This story I shared was how God has given me confidence. I was shy and afraid to speak. I did not have confidence myself and I certainly did not have confidence in who God was calling me to be. But He anointed me to preach good news. It is a great comeback story. It shows how he can rebuild the broken parts of our lives.

But it wasn’t the comeback story I wanted to share with you. When I started hearing about this idea in our planning meetings I was very excited that I was going to share this comeback story with you..

My name is Kelly My comeback story is this.. I am no longer a slave to fear.

I’m a child of God

It sounded great...with the help of God over these last few years, I believed I had conquered my anxiety, fear did not control me.

I was excited to record a video of me saying it.

Then last week, I fell apart.

Our pastoral team went to a conference in Florida.

We go each year to meet with other leaders and talk about what it means to be a church that will multiply.

My oldest Daughter has been away for the last four months ...she is doing a semester abroad in Italy and was spending a few days in Croatia while I was in Florida.

I had never heard of going to Croatia to visit. It made me nervous...I thought of the war with Bosnia. But it is a beautiful place with an amazing ocean and gorgeous waterfalls. Everyone should go there.

I woke up at 5am in the morning on Thursday morning- She had texted that she had landed in Croatia, I fell back asleep and woke at 6:15 to see she had not replied to my text- and I did not hear from her for a few hours.

I began to have an overwhelming sense of fear.

Now I had just spent the last few days listening to strong preaching and worshiping God for hours each day.

I know truth... I have preached truth-

do not be or stay anxious-God does not give me a spirit of fear, he gives me Love, power and a sound mind.

I know what anxiety is.. It is thinking I can look into the future and come up with my version of what's going to occur. That is not from God.

Yet, here I was ..Overwhelmed by fear. Sick, crying. Anxious and sad ...I reached out to some friends at home and asked them to pray for me. I was in a beautiful, warm place...in NH my family had icy roads ..I tried to sit by the pool with my Bible-I was trying to read scripture and pray...but I could not calm down... I had a really, really hard morning.

Around 8:30, My daughter had a moment to text and say "hey I'm here- Needed to wait until my room was ready to check in".

All is good.

I was no longer scared- now I was full of shame.
I felt like a liar...and a fake.

Like I shouldn't even be doing anything for God because when I should have had faith, I had fear.

But that is not truth. The truth is I am just a human...I am not perfect...But I am loved and so are you.

And so my encouragement to some of you today is: if you're sitting in your seat today ... thinking to yourself

" why I am even trying again, I am a failure" OR

maybe you saw the comeback stories on FB and thought to yourself this week...I don't have a comeback story...." Know that you do!

Don't believe the lie that says you are too messed up. If you asked Christ to be your savior, perhaps you have been baptized... or maybe this spring you found a way to be part of a journey group, and then suddenly, the storms of life have come, and you respond in a way that makes you feel like you only have a failure story.

Know that God is with you
and for you and has a plan for your life.

Lysa Terkurst wrote one of my favorite ways to describe truth... feelings are indicators –but they are not truth.

How we feel is not the truth- God speaks truth in His word. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.. and he now calls us sons and daughter and friend.

Maybe you're sitting here today... and life is tough. There's a new role and you don't feel ready for it.

Maybe you're a new parent or maybe this summer your baby goes to college and you will have an empty nest. Maybe you had a job and your identity was so tightly connected to it. And now the role is gone. I have been there...before I had children I was a teacher-my name was Miss James, and that was my identity. Then I had children, and for a while I did not know who I was without being a teacher.

Or maybe school has ended- and you do not know what the next step in life is.

If you are in place where you are rebuilding- know that we need to build our life on this truth I am who Christ says I am.

He is our redeemer...he makes all things new...and he can call us to rebuild...just like He called Nehemiah.

In this life, every one of us will find ourselves with things that we thought were solid and lasting – family, money, a job or career...a position, and one day –we go to sleep and when we wake up the next morning life appears to be in shambles around us.

This world is broken. But God makes beautiful things. He can rebuild and redeem the broken things and make all things new.

But how do we handle the times when life is falling apart. When that happens, we have to make a choice.

We have to listen to the still small voice of
Christ saying I am calling you to rebuild.

Today you may be at the start of your comeback story -you may be starting over again.
There may be rebuilding taking place in your life.

God is calling me -once again -to not out my trust in my own understanding- but to put my trust in Him.

God may be calling you to rebuild.

That's what God did for Nehemiah.

Nehemiah had a job. His role was serving the king as the cup bearer- he tested the food and the drink of the King to be sure it was not poisoned.

He had a role with influence, he was known by the King. But God called Nehemiah to do a new thing.

Last week Jeff shared who Nehemiah was and how he was a man of prayer. Nehemiah spent four months in prayer before bringing the need to rebuild Jerusalem as a request to the King.

He was called to help rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Today- you and I are also called to rebuild.

As a church, we are called to rebuild our community in Lowell...Lowell is where this church was planted. And we are called to stay here and continue to help people find their way back to God.

You might also be called too work on a broken relationship, start a new career, or take a step of faith that does not make sense. But you know that God is asking you to take that step.

Even if the step of faith step is required because something in life tripped us up.

If God is calling you to rebuild...How do you do it?

I have two do's and a don't to remember what to do when God is calling you to rebuild.

The First is.. Do your job.

1. Do your job... since I am from New England that phrase makes me think of the New England Patriots.
It is a phrase used by coach Bill Belichick.

Bill Speros of Boston.com says

The first time he said it was- during the AFC divisional playoffs in 2007, the Pats were tied up with the Jacksonville Jaguars 14-14. "Do your job. That's what the problem is right there," Belichick said. "Take care of your responsibility and just do it ..."

At that time the Patriots were 16-0 — The Patriots ended up winning the game and made it to the Super Bowl that year as well

(...if you are a Giant's fan, you know how that Super Bowl ended)

Speros continues...Belichick's greatest management victory...is he taught his team that

Consistency forms habits, and habits form a culture. When the pressure is on... everyone focuses on their jobs like they're supposed to.

Do your job.

As followers of Christ, our job is given to us in many places in Scripture.

In I Thes 5:16-18 We see that we are called to be joyful always, Pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances. For this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus.

That phrase be joyful always remind me of the book of Nehemiah which contains one of my favorite passages of Scripture.. The joy of the Lord is my strength. Nehemiah 8:10
My strength would not be possible without God's joy..

Who is Nehemiah? How was he able to say that God's Joy is his strength?

Nehemiah had to leave behind a role as cupbearer- now in chapters 2 and 3 he is a supervisor, and encourager...not a boss, but a leader. He shares the vision and encourages the people with a big goal..

Nehemiah 2:17

17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace."

As we've traveled from the garden of Genesis through the Old Testament we have seen God tell Abraham, back in the book of Genesis- that He would set apart a people to make His name great.

God would use the people of Israel- to make himself known throughout the earth.

In the last month we looked at unlikely leaders- we saw David. His son Solomon would build a temple in the city of Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem, like all cities at that time, was protected by a wall with Gates.

But the city was destroyed and Nehemiah knows that the wall, and the city are in ruins. In places it was even burned.

The people of Israel who had returned from captivity had not repaired any of the damage.

There were people living next to the broken down walls. But without a leader and without a vision they did not repair them.

Nehemiah prays- but he also does his job.

When we were leaving Florida- our staff took a photo with the Lead Pastor of Hillsong- a church that has impacted the world, in music and campuses all over the world.

When he was speaking at exponential- the conference we attended- he spoke of how the kingdom of God advances.

God uses the right people, at the right time in the right place. It could be you or me or Nehemiah. –right person, right place- right time.

Nehemiah was the right person in the right place at the right time. He comes with the authority of the King, having spent time in prayer, and tells the people of Israel what God is calling them to do.

He knows what is needed, because he has prayed and spent time seeing what is needed. Let's look at Chapter 2 verse 12.

12 I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

Chapters 2 and 3 can be hard to read and understand- it is filled with names of people and places we do not know.

But God says in II Tim 3:16
All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

So let's look at verses 13 and 14

13 By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.

My Bible has a map showing the gates and the wall- part of it had broken down over time- other parts were destroyed by fire.

In Chapter 2 Nehemiah describes the route he took to survey the damage around the city of Jerusalem.

14 Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through;

The damage is so severe his horse can't get through...

It is hard for us to imagine. We're not familiar with cities being protected by gates and walls. If he were to walk around the city of Lowell, he would've said

I went up to Christian Hill, behind the Robinson school the gate was broken.. I continued on to Centerville over the bridge to Pawtucket Ville, and behind UMass there was damage...

Verses 15 and 16 continue- He does his job...

15 so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. **16** The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

This job is big. The wall has been damaged, the gates ruined by fire -no one has taken care of it for a long time.

But he is used to doing his job. Nehemiah is able to do his job because he knows how to do hard things.

We can do hard things- In the book of Phil (4:13) Paul tells us- I can do all things through Christ who is my strength...

Nehemiah knew God had called him and would strengthen and equip him for what he needs to do.

When God calls us, he will equip and give us the strength to do what it is he created in advance for us to do.

Nehemiah needs to do His job and He needs to do hard things

So do we...

Life is hard...Jesus said-in this world we will be trouble...
But take heart, I have overcome the world.

Nehemiah's job includes leading the people. He
Leads them by speaking the truth of who God is.

18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

How amazing- Let's start rebuilding- and they start.

Next week, we will spend a week talking about the truth of life....when you are doing your job, and doing hard things...you will have opposition.

But today- we see Nehemiah leading by speaking truth- The God of heaven will give us success.

I believe that's why we spend each weekend here together, to remind ourselves of the good news.

The gospel. God in his great love, paid the price for our sin. He calls us his own.. We are his children.. Loved and returned to him because of the sacrifice of His son Jesus.

That is what good leaders do- they speak truth

Neh 6:15 will tell us that the wall was rebuilt in 52 days.

Nehemiah was able to accomplish this by assigning different sections of the wall's rebuilding to various groups.

Families were building the wall where they live- craftsmen's used the gifts God had given them to do the task that they needed to do.

That is amazing. But when you're walking through a time of life that is hard, 52 days is a long time. Last week I learned two and half hours is a long time.

Some of us have been rebuilding for a long time.

You're doing the right thing at the right time.
You're the right person to do it.
But you are tired.

In order to rebuild, I believe we need to do hard things. We need to do our job..those are the 2 do's..

The don't...is from the book of Galatians chapter 6

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Don't grow weary in doing good
If you are here today and you are tired
Don't quit. Do your job- do the hard thing.
But do not do life alone.

Nehemiah 3

Nehemiah leads the people. He has the right people in the right places.

They use their gifts, Families serve together.

God blessed the work.

3:1 They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated...

2 The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them.

Chapter 3 continues with names I can't pronounce, and people we know nothing about.

But God knows them, He knows us by name.

They matter. You matter. Harbor-we as a community matter. These heroes of faith did what God called them to do with the gifts God had given to them.

3 :5 The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

I hope this is never true for me. Sometimes in life we will be given the gift of leadership and authority.

How we use that gift matters.

These men were not leaders...

But Nehemiah- was a leader. He had a vision- He helped the people see what God was calling them to.

AND...He led by example.

As governor he was allowed to have items set apart, but Nehemiah didn't take advantage of food and land allotments.

He saw there was already such a great burden on the people of his province (Nehemiah 5:14–19).

Verse 6- 11 continue with the people of God doing their part to rebuild the wall.

We see goldsmiths and perfume makers using their talents and gifts to repair the wall.

God knew that those skills were needed.

He placed them there, the right people in the right place at the right time.

Have you seen that in your own life? I have. I can look back and know- if I had not learned what I learned in my past- I could not do what I do now. I can only do what God is calling me to do, because of what I have learned. Our past is never wasted.

As we continue through chapter 3.we see a favorite verse of mine.

12 Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.

Ya... he did- any fathers of daughters here today...my husband is the dad of three girls.

I encourage dad's, mom, grandparents, teachers... speak life over the people, the children ,that God has put in your life.

I stand here today because people in my past spoke life over me. I love this...,their dad was the right person,and so were his daughters.

20 years ago I served at a Home mission Church in Lowell. My husband and I were new parents. My daughter was a future leader. This meant she was a really hard toddler. We did not know what to do.

But our pastor at the time- spoke life over her.

Told us not to surround ourselves with people who couldn't see her as God saw her.

I know she is who she is today, In part, because that man spoke truth... I could not see it yet... but she was who God created her in advance to be.

I was able to tell him on Facebook recently that he played a part in helping her become a leader.

I love his reply. It is an encouragement to anyone who is finding a stage of parenting to be hard.

It is a challenge and a blessing to be called to parent future leaders.

Chapter 3 has the sons and daughters of Jerusalem repairing the wall and the gates. Read it when you get home. It took many people doing their job, doing hard things and not growing weary doing good to repair the wall.

Our life may not have a physical wall that needs to be repaired. But we still need the help of God to do what He has created us to do...

Nehemiah is found in the Old Testament- the time before Jesus. After Jesus had died and rose again..a leader came along who helps those around him understand the truth of Jesus and God's great love.

To a church in Ephesus- Paul wrote what we call the book of Ephesians

Ephesians 1 11-12 The message

11-12 It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

My hope is that as we leave today the truth of these words will allow us to rest, in the truth of who God is and what he says. We can believe Him.

God is for us- He loves us. Before we even heard the name of Jesus- God saw us and knew us- he knit us together in our Mother's womb.

He has designed us for His glory

You are the right person, at the right time in the right place to take that step of faith.

We are created to help people find their way back to Him.
And when you take those faith filled steps...Remember-
Do your job, Do the hard things- and don't grow weary in doing good.

Pray-