

It's Your Time
"Making Room"
Nehemiah 13:4-9
January 6-8, 2012
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Intro:

When Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem, he found that a storeroom in the temple had been used by Tobiah, an enemy of Israel (Neh 6:1). In reaction, Nehemiah cleaned out the room and replaced the missing temple items for proper storage. In this situation, Nehemiah's actions are that he *learned* (of the situation), *became* (upset and threw out the offending items), *demanded* (the room purified), and *brought back* (the holy items of the temple). This serves as a great model for us when we take action cleaning rooms in our life.

Perhaps things have been accumulating in the temple of your body. You need to clear out some of the old in order to make room for something new. Has the enemy been storing his stuff inside your temple? If you want God to do something in your life, you'll need to take inventory and take action. *Open the door to that room...what's that inside? Does it belong? If not, get it out! Now, what should be inside?...well, let's get it in there! Make room!*

How to make room in your life:

Main Points:

1. **Identify what needs to change.** Take inventory of your situation in life. Look for things that need to be changed and preserved. What things can you be thankful for? Set goals, set standards and lay a foundation. But, be sure to *address it* (do something with what you have identified). It takes courage to access it and address it. Don't explain it away, wish it away, or ignore it.
2. **Identify what needs to go.** Once you have identified any changes, get them out of the "room." Be ruthless in taking action. Like Nehemiah, throw it out--don't wait for it to go on its own (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Jn 2:13-17). Only you can take the actions required to rid yourself of these things in your life. Nobody can do it for you. Also, don't get discouraged—just be diligent in removing whatever you need to eradicate from your life.
3. **Identify what needs to be restored.** What needs restoration in your life? Nehemiah brought back what was originally meant to be inside the room. Fill the empty room with something that will be pleasing to the Lord and will draw you closer to him.

Make room for God to work and expand his presence in your life (Is. 54:2-3). Plant a seed in the soil of God's provision for you. The soil is fertile for growth and the effort and sweat you put into it will reap spiritual benefits for eternity. But don't expect it to be easy or expect a rose garden—because even a rose garden contains thorns.

Odds and Ends:

- When Tobiah was given a room in the temple, this defiled it and made it commonplace rather than explicitly holy. God is the One True God and he and his place of worship are to be exalted, never reduced to the level of normality or mediocrity. In scripture, God is connected with Jerusalem (Neh 13:7; Dan 9:16; Zech 8:3; 1 Kg 11:36). Here's the heart of the problem: how the priests had treated the temple reflected how they thought of God. When Nehemiah saw that the temple in Jerusalem, the house of God, had been treated with such indifference and irreverence (actually referred to as "evil" in some translations and the Greek [v. 7-8]), this sparked him to take aggressive measures to correct the problem. Nehemiah also did not just clear out the room, but ritually cleansed it and placed holy items, those set apart for the worship of God, back inside the room. Nehemiah restored not only the intended function of the room, but in doing so, ascribed the proper glory and holiness back to God and his temple.
- Nehemiah 13:10-13: The chamber that Tobiah was given was intended to hold the tithes and offerings for the Levites. Since the temple chamber was not being used properly as a place of storage for the utensils and offerings, the priests were not receiving their allotted portions of the tithes. When the rooms of our life contain things other than the things of God, we are not the only ones to lose out on God's blessings to us, but will also affect those that God wants to bless through us.

Discussion questions for "Making Room":

1. Have you ever taken an inventory of your life? If so, what did you find in your life that needed changed? (Only answer if you feel comfortable—since it is personal, don't feel pressured to answer). Will you do it this year? Why or why not? What barriers exist that keep us from identifying issues in our life that need change? What are some barriers we face in addressing the things that need change and how do we overcome them?
2. What is more difficult—identifying changes or removing them? Have you ever tried to empty a room by waiting for it to remove itself or to simply "go away?" What happened? Read Neh. 13:8-9. What lessons can we learn from what Nehemiah did? What drove Nehemiah to do what he did?
3. What needs to be restored in your life this year? Nehemiah brought back the temple offerings and utensils into the room so that it could function as intended. What lesson can we learn from this in our lives? Do some of the "rooms" of our life have a function? What can happen if you empty a room and not replace it with something?
4. How will this message help you with the upcoming fast? What will you fast from in 2012 (Daniel, liquid, media, etc.)? Why did you choose them/it? What were some of the results you had from the fast in 2011?