



COURAGE FOR YOUR CALLING

Nehemiah | 10.12.25

Libin Abraham

(The following text is automatically generated and has not been edited)

Libin Abraham 0:00

There was a city worker in Chicago who described his life like this. He said, I dig the ditch to earn the money to buy the food, to get the strength to dig the ditch, to earn the money to buy the food, to get the strength to dig the ditch, to earn the money to buy the food, to get the strength, and on and on. That may be how a lot of people live their lives, in this endless cycle of toil and labor just for survival. For other people, it is a cycle of pursuing the futility of pleasure which ends up being so meaningless. For others, they're trying to just impress other people, whether it be parents or neighbors or co workers, or even just proving their own worth to themselves. It was Mark Twain who said it like this that the two most important days of your life are first of all, the day you were born and the day you find out why. The day you're born and the day you find out why. Now we've got an annual rhythm called your birthday to remember. Help you remember when you are born, what we need even more is to remember why we were born. If the day you were born is the day of your coming, the day you discover why is the day of your calling, it is the day of your purpose, and you realize, why do I have a breath in my lungs? Why do I exist? It's the invitation to discover calling and purpose in life. Have you done that? Have you discovered your why? Now here at bentry, we would unapologetically, unapologetically say to you that our greatest calling and our greatest purpose is to know Jesus. That's where it begins. That's what gives us life. That's the utmost, highest call to our life. Before we are called to a profession or a ministry or a serving role or vocation, we are first called to a person, and his name is Jesus. It is to know God, to know Christ and experience intimacy with Him. But as we know Jesus, He invites us to his purpose on the earth, to really good things he has prepared for us. In fact, that's what Paul teaches us in Ephesians two verse 10, when he says, For we are His workmanship created in Christ. Jesus for say, with me, good works. We're not saved by good works, but every Christian is called to do good works, good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do. Notice, it's good works, plural. So every single day you live, God has prepared a good work for you to do. There is something needed in the world to bring his kingdom down here on earth as it is in heaven, that can only happen as you avail yourself to the good works he's invited you to so friends. We're not just in a waiting room for heaven. We are daily stepping into the calling of God to the kingdom purposes of God here on earth, to the good works he's invited us into so last week, we opened up the book of Nehemiah, and in the book of Nehemiah, he hears the word that his home city, where his family is from, has been lying in ruins for 141 years, and as he hears the news of Jerusalem's broken walls and a city that's been burned up, he finds out his why. Why Does he exist? He feels this holy discontent from the heart of God, and he's broken hearted as he hears the news. So he laments, he mourns, he fasts, he prays about the brokenness of his city. Nehemiah encountered his calling in the face of the brokenness and pain of others, and so often God will do that. He puts a story in your mind, a place in your mind. He shows you the story, the plight of a certain group of people, and that's where you find your why. It could be a neighbor, it could be a co worker, and you realize man, this person, needs the hope of Jesus. They need to experience the faithfulness of God, you've just found out your why. So in chapter one, he discovers this news. But in chapter two, he finds the courage to step into his calling, the courage you need for your calling. So here's how Nehemiah two begins. It says like this, during the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was set before him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had never been sad in his presence, so the king said to me, why do you look so sad when you aren't sick? This. Is nothing but the sadness of the heart. Nehemiah is a cup bearer serving at the pleasure of the most powerful man in the world, the Persian king. He's got a cush job, but as he finds out in Susa about the brokenness of the city, he began to mourn and weep over it. And in chapter two, there's a time gap, a distance of time between chapter one and chapter two. In chapter one, all of the events of the first chapter happened in the month of Kislev, which is like our December. So all that Nehemiah hears about the brokenness of the city happened in the month of Kislev. And now, when you flip the chapter over, and we're in chapter two, it begins with the month of Nisan, not the truck of Nisan, but the month of Nisan. Nisan

would be like our April. So hear me, four months have passed between chapter one and chapter two for four months, Nehemiah has been carrying this burden from God for a broken city that he loves. It's been four months of lamenting and fasting and praying and grieving over the brokenness of his city. Four months have gone by since he's felt the burden that he cannot shake off. In fact, at the end of Nehemiah one he ends his prayer like this four months ago, please Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and to that of your servants who delight to revere your name. Give your servant success today and grant him compassion in the presence of this man, Nehemiah has been praying this prayer for four whole months, and you thought you've been praying a long time for something. Every day he wakes up praying, God today, give me strength and give compassion my way as I approach the king by the burden of my heart, will you give me strength? And he goes and nothing happens. He wakes up the next day, God, if today is the day, will you give me strength? Goes to the king, nothing happens for month after month, for four months, carrying the burden, feeling the Broken Heart of God, mourning, weeping, praying is today, the day and four months have gone by. Here's a hard part about your why and about your calling. Calling often involves waiting. Calling involves waiting. And here Nehemiah has been waiting four months. Some of you might have been waiting for four years, maybe four decades. You have felt the burden of God in your heart, but you are waiting for the door to open. You're waiting for the resources to come. You're waiting for the funding. You're waiting for the opportunity to arise. And here Nehemiah is having gotten a call from God, but it's been four months, waiting can often be the most frustrating part of our calling. That's when you doubt. That's when you worry, did I miss it? Did I get it wrong? God, where are you in the waiting there's a plant that grows across Asia, Asia called the Chinese bamboo, and the farmer will plant the seed of a Chinese bamboo tree in the ground. And for the first year, he will fertilize the ground, water it, tend to the soil. At the end of the first year, nothing happens, no sign of life, no green shoot or sprout. He spends another year tilling the ground, watering the seed, tending to the soil. At the end of year two, guess what? Nothing is to be seen. The ground is still bare, no sign of life. Year three comes. He waters the soil, takes care of the seed, all that, and nothing happens. Year four, still no sign of life. The ground is bare. There's nothing coming out of the ground. And then in year five, sometime across year five, in the span of six weeks, the seed bears fruit. And within the span of six weeks, a 90 foot bamboo tree comes out of the ground. This tree will shoot up 90 feet across six weeks.

Libin Abraham 9:24

But here's the question, how long has the tree been growing six weeks or five years? How long five years it's been growing all across five years, most of which, in ways you could not see, because there was root work happening under the ground. The foundation was being laid, the root was getting established, and then, because in the waiting, something happened underneath the surface that you couldn't see when the time came fast and strong. Long. This bamboo tree will rise 90 feet tall. And I just want to encourage some of you who've been waiting, your waiting is not wasted, friend, it is not wasted. God is doing root work in your waiting. He is shaping your heart. He is building your character. He is teaching you how to trust him when you don't see him at work, he is showing you what endurance in the waiting looks like. A waiting is now wasted. Can I get an amen and a your waiting isn't wasted. So I just wonder, if you're discouraged in the waiting Am I would tell you, wait patiently on the Lord. Keep pursuing. Keep waiting. Go back to that text in verse two. It says he's there before the king, and the king said, Why do you look so sad? Why aren't when you're not sick? There's nothing but the sadness of heart. Now here's a moment Nehemiah has been waiting for for four months to be noticed and asked what's going on, Nehemiah, tell me about the burden you're carrying, but notice his response to the king's to the king's request of him. I was overwhelmed with fear. I was overwhelmed with fear, Nehemiah, this is a moment you can lay out your plan, but this is a moment of great fear. Why? Because you weren't allowed to be sad in the king's presence. In those days, if you served the monarch, no emotions were allowed except happiness. There were classes that taught you how to smile in front of the king, because your sadness could be interpreted as not approving of the king's agenda, or dissatisfaction with the king, and there are stories when people were sad simply in the presence of a king that were banished or or killed for worse. So Nehemiah, he can't hide his sadness anymore. It's been four months. He is visibly distraught with the burden he is carrying, and the king notices. And the first response to the King who notices isn't, yeah, I'm finally noticed, but rather it's he was overwhelmed with fear, because he knows that to be sad in the king's presence could mean his execution. It could mean his life, he was overwhelmed with fear. One translation says he was dreadfully afraid. Sometimes, when we think of heroes in the Scripture, like Nehemiah, we think Man, those are fearless people. They were never afraid. But let me tell you people who did great things for God. They had great fear. They had great anxiety. They had great worry. So here's Nehemiah, and you know what he has to find in this moment. Here's the second thing. Calling just doesn't require waiting. Calling requires courage. He is overwhelmed with fear, but he's got to find courage in the moment. But courage sometimes doesn't feel like Courage. Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is when by faith, you keep moving even when you are afraid. One person said it like this, when you can't overcome your fear, just do it scared. Just do it scared. When you don't know what's on the other

side of this act of obedience, just do it anyway. You can do it worried, you can do it scared, you can do it without knowing the whole story. Faith says I'm going to be fearful, but still, I'm not going to let fear control me. I'm going to find courage in my fear, even if the risks are high and the stakes are high, I'm going to keep pursuing the calling of God, even if I'm afraid, Amen, that's courage to keep going even in the midst of fear. The Nehemiah says, I was overwhelmed with fear, but I replied to the king, and here's what he said, May the king live forever. Why should I not be sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire, and the king asked me, What is your request? I want to pause here for a moment. Nehemiah is very strategic in how he answers this question, as if he has had four months to prepare. He doesn't say, oh, there's a city called Jerusalem that's burned up. No, no. He says, the city where my ancestors lie are in ruins and has been destroyed. Why would he answer it that way? Well, it's because he's speaking to King Artaxerxes. You know who King Artaxerxes? Stepmother is her name is Esther the queen in Persia Nehemiah knows that he can appeal before the king. In terms of his ancestors, the king will be opened to. Because his ancestors are the family members of his stepmother, Esther. So Nehemiah says, you want to apply, I'm sad. I'm sad because my ancestors, by the way, your stepmom's ancestors, Queen Esther, who was married to your dad, our ancestors, are lying dead, buried in a city that's been destroyed. That's why I'm sad. And this opens up the heart of the king to the sadness of Nehemiah. And the king says, Oh, tell me your request. Imagine in that moment, there was a sigh of relief, because Nehemiah realized I get to see another day. He ain't going to kill me. So the king says, Tell me a request. And again, this is what Nehemiah has been waiting for. But what does he do? So I prayed. I didn't talk to him. I prayed. I prayed to the God of the heavens and answer the king if it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, send me to Judah and to the city where my ancestors are buried so that I may rebuild it. Nehemiah. In this moment of the King asking him what his request is, what does he do? He stops to pray. This is one of those Hail Mary quick in the moment, Flash kind of prayer. But he can pray like that because his life has been immersed in prayer for four months. He's been beseeching the throne of God in mourning and fasting. But even then, when the request finally comes where he can share his heart, he says, Hold up, King. I need to speak to speak to the God of the heavens. I need to go to God because why That's where courage is found. Courage isn't self generated. Courage is found in absolute dependence on the God of the universe. And I love this phrase, the God of the heavens. That's a common phrase Nehemiah uses all across the book. It's as if he's standing in front of this earthly king, the most powerful man in the universe. And yet, Nehemiah knows the one who's ultimately in charge. It's not you king Artaxerxes, but it is my god, the god of the heavens. I look to him. I pray to him, I trust in Him. So here's the deal. Courage isn't about being fearless. Courage is about being prayer filled. You don't have to wait till you're fearless to take the next step and walk into your calling or walk into the way that God has invited you to serve. You don't have to wait till you're fearless to start that job or to start that business or to seek reconciliation when it feels so scary, you don't have to be fearless. But if you're prayer filled, even a man or woman who is afraid can step in their calling, because even if fear remains, you won't be overcome by fear. Because when you go to the God of heaven, you find courage. You realize who is on the throne, and it is not a human boss or a human president or a human king. You realize he is on the throne. So because he is on the throne, I can have courage. Amen, the God of the heavens is on your side, friend.

Libin Abraham 18:21

So Nehemiah asked, Hey, can I just go to Judah and rebuild the city? Now we kind of read past that. And okay, that's a cute request, but it's actually a big deal. And here's why it's a massive deal. Many years ago, it is this same king who stopped the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It's a little bit of a quick story. I won't take long, but when the 50,000 went back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city, there were some people who opposed them, and they sent a letter to King Artaxerxes and say, look, there are some people building the city of Jerusalem, but you need to stop them, because if they build their city, they're going to revolt against you. They've done this before, they're going to revolt against you. So you need to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem and King Artaxerxes writes back in the book of Ezra, chapter four. Here's what he says. The King sent a reply to his chief deputy, rehum shimshai, the scribe, and the rest of their colleagues living in Samaria and elsewhere in the region west of the Euphrates River. Here's this letter, greetings. The letter you sent us has been translated and read in my presence. I issued a decree and a search was conducted. It was discovered that this city has had uprisings against kings since ancient times, and there have been rebellions and revolts in it, powerful kings have also ruled over Jerusalem and exercised authority over the whole region west of the Euphrates River and tribute, duty and land tax were paid to them, meaning not to me, but to them. Therefore, issue an order for these men to. Stop so that this city will not be rebuilt until a further decree has been pronounced by me see that you not neglect this matter. Otherwise the damage will increase and the Royal interest will suffer. And soon, as soon as the text of the king Artaxerxes letter was read to rehum and shimshai, the scribe and their colleagues, here's what they did. They immediately went to the Jews in Jerusalem and forcibly stopped them. How did this happen? Because of the King Nehemiah is with he ordered the city of Jerusalem to not be rebuilt. It was his edict that

stopped the building of Jerusalem. So when Nehemiah goes to King Artaxerxes, he is about to ask the king to reverse his foreign policy. How do you think that would happen today? It ain't going to go well, friends, but that's what courage does it? Dreams of the impossible against all odds, and takes you to asking the bold question by yourself. Sonny Nehemiah isn't just going to ask the king to reverse his policy. He's going to say, King, let me go rebuild it. But can you pay for it and give me all the security guarantees I need to travel there and give me all the timber from your forest. And while you're at it, can you build my house too? While I'm there, this guy is bold. This bro is bold. And here's the request of the king. Verse six, the king with the queen seated beside him asked me, How long will your journey take, and when will you return? So I gave him a definite time, and it pleased the king to send me. I also said to the king, oh, PS King, if it pleases the king, let me have letters written to the governors of the region west of the Euphrates River so that they will grant me safe passage until I reach Judah and let me have a letter written to Asaph, who is the keeper of the king's forest, so that he will give me all the timber I need. All the wood I need to rebuild the gates of the temple's fortress, the city wall and the home by the way, which I will live in. The king granted my request. Why for the gracious hand of my God was on me. Nehemiah is not shy to ask the bold request. He feels the courage of God inside of him, so he says, King, here's how many days I need off. Here are the letters I need write to so and so. Tell Asaph to give me all the timber I need. Can you build my house for me? And the gracious hand of God was on him. Here's why you can have courage today you serve a God who is able to reverse even the edicts of a king. You serve a God even if doors are closed. He can open them just with a whisper, just with a word. You serve a God who can even use his enemies to fund his kingdom work through you. Isn't that just like him. If God before you, who can be against you, if he is on your side, what do you have to fear? You got a God who reverses the edicts of the enemy. The heart of the king is in the hand of God, and He directs it like water in his hand. That's the God you serve, and that's where courage is found. Hear me, you can be courageous, because God is gracious, so don't be shy about your request. He opens up the windows of heaven, and he doesn't just give you a little bit or even just what you need. My Bible said immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine. That's the kind of provision he pours out for his children. Your calling requires waiting, but don't give up on the waiting. Your calling will require courage, but you can be courageous, because God is gracious. But in this reply, you find a third thing about calling. Calling compels preparation. Calling compels preparation. When the time came for Nehemiah to give his request to the king, Nehemiah didn't say, Well, hold on, let me go. Give me another month to come up with a plan. He's had four months to come up with a plan. His waiting was not passive, it was actually really active. In those four months, he began to get a list together of what does he need, who does he need it from? How long does he need to take? God for work to step into the call he was planning and preparing in the waiting. And if you're in a season of waiting, plan as if the door is already opened. Plan and prepare as if you've already got the Yes. If the opportunity came tomorrow, what would you need? What would you ask for? Sometimes we think, if we have faith, we don't need a plan. But friends, you can be spiritual and strategic at the same time, faith in God and planning for his work are not contradictory to each other. They go hand in hand. In fact, planning starts in our prayer. We got a hold of the heart of God, and he begins to breathe wisdom and clarity and vision. Start writing it down. Faith. Moving into action causes you to have a renewed vision of what could be, and you start to plan for it. You don't just start drooping about it, you start preparing. Calling requires preparation, and here Nehemiah is prepared when he's got the opportunity to act. What's amazing also about Nehemiah's current role as cup bearer was how God was preparing him for the season he was about to go into. Sometimes we think a cup bearer just kind of randomly tasted wine and food make sure there was no poison in it. But actually, in ancient times, cup bearers oversaw the entire supply chain of the food and drink that would be brought to the king's court. They were the chief of staff for hospitality, so they managed all of the logistics, all of the servants and the people and the staff from the farm to table, from vineyard to wine cellar, they managed the entire process of supply chain and food making and food delivery and Wine delivery. So Nehemiah has spent years crafting his gifts of organization, of honing in the tools that God has given him, learning how to manage people and lead a project and meet deadlines. And God has taken all that he's been doing in service to the king, and he's about to use all of that to serve his ultimate calling of building a city and mobilizing an army of people and overseeing the construction of an entire city. None of what he was doing in Persia was wasted, all that he was doing, all that he was learning, all that he was getting refined in, was being used for what he was about to go into.

Libin Abraham 27:40

You might think what you're doing in the season is for nothing, but actually it's shaping you. It's forming your gifts. It's sharpening your skills for the next season, or the calling God has on you. One of my first jobs as a my last church, when I first started, many years ago, was a campus pastor of one of our portable sites that met in a school every Sunday morning at 5am I would pick up the church truck and unlock the storage units and the trailers and grab the signs and go down the street, planting signs in the yard of our neighborhood where the church was so that people could know where to meet. Then I come and help set up and tear it tear down and go to the service, and didn't preach. I was just a campus pastor, and then tear

down everything. And now one day, I remember my boss asking me, Hey, could you write an operations manual for the entire thing that happens on Sunday morning? I wanted to say, No, I would hate to do that. But of course, I said, Yes, whatever you need, sir. And for three to four years I was like, God, this is now what I signed up for when I said yes to ministry, like I went through, let me preach. Let me do what I want to do. But let me tell you, in those three to four years, God was building me. He was shaping my heart and the things I learned behind the scenes, not doing what I wanted to do was laying a foundation for ministry now, because I learned then, ministry isn't about the platform. Ministry isn't about doing what's visible. Ministry is serving Jesus and His people, whatever that looks like, whether putting up signs, or children serving in a kid's classroom, or leading a small group, or mopping the floor. All of that is equally valid in the service of a king, and God uses all of it for the purpose and plan he has for you. Amen, none of your skills are wasted. All of it is brought into culmination. And finally, Nehemiah will become a governor, because he knew how to manage the king's affair and the king's court. So the text goes on in verse nine, I'm almost done. I went to the governors of the region west of the Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent officers of the infantry and cavalry with me. He. Even ask for that was just a bonus, because how gracious God is. But things weren't always great. Conflict happened, and verse 10 says, When Sanballat the horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard that someone had come to pursue the prosperity of the Israelites, they were greatly displeased. This is the beginning of a long drawn attention we'll dive into in a few weeks. But things got hard pretty quickly as these two individuals, who have been profiting from the ruins of Jerusalem, they didn't want a courageous and a faithful man like Nehemiah to come in and start rebuilding the city, because that would mess up their income stream. They begin to complain, they begin to be displeased, and they begin to formulate a plan against Nehemiah. So here's the last thing about your calling. Calling requires waiting, calling requires preparation, calling requires courage, and calling invites conflict. This is where some of us want to unsubscribe from our calling, because conflict ain't fun. Tension isn't wanted. But when you walk out your calling, you can expect conflict. Sometimes the conflict comes after the Red Sea has been parted and after you've said yes to Jesus and you've said yes to his plan and call on your life, that's when all the people start acting crazy around you. That's when the issues arise. That's when the conflict comes. But I want to just tell you, the conflict in your calling is not a denial of your calling. It is an affirmation of your calling. It is a sign that you are on the right track. You keep going. You keep building. Nehemiah didn't even waste the breath trying to defend his calling the Sanballat and Tobiah, he kept building because he knew that if God called him, God would be faithful, and the hand of God that was resting on him would be able to protect him and sustain him all the way through the end of this project, calling can be expected. Friends and conflict will be anticipated. I love how Charles Spurgeon said it like this, yeah, my little Luke is saying, Yeah, that's actually my five minute window. That time's over, but he wakes up from his death. Spurgeon said it like this, to have Satan as your adversary is actually really comforting, because then you know, you have God as your friend. To have Satan as your adversary is comforting, because then God is your friend. I'd rather have Satan as my enemy than a friend, and God as my friend than my enemy, because when you live out your calling and purpose, you find your why, and you step into the good works. Satan is afraid. He begins to tremble, because the Kingdom of Darkness is beginning to flee as you bring light and hope, into your workplace, into the nations around you, into the people he begins to turn as your adversary. So when you seek conflict, don't you run into it? Don't you run away from it? No, no, you go straight into it, because courage is being breathed into your heart, and that conflict is actually an affirmation of your calling. So here's the four things from Nehemiah, two that you can walk away with when you navigate calling, because the book of Nehemiah isn't just about ancient walls being built. It's about the calling of God in your life. But the calling requires waiting. Some of you, I feel online and in this room, you're on the brink of giving up because you've been waiting too long on your calling. God is saying, don't give up in the waiting. Your waiting isn't wasted. You may be coming on that fifth year of that bamboo tree where things about to shoot up 90 feet, or you may be in the first year, I don't know, but keep waiting prayerfully and patiently. But in your waiting, find courage. Don't let fear demotivate you. You'll have fear. You won't have to wait. Don't wait till the fear goes away. But find courage in the fear. Do it scared in the waiting. Begin to prepare, maybe even this week. Get out a piece of paper and a notebook and write, what do you need for the calling of God on your life? Who do you need? What would it look like? What does that vision entail? Write it down. Begin to prepare as if it was going to happen tomorrow morning, at 8am and lastly, don't run from the conflict anticipated. Now think about the story of God and the story of Jesus. God has set in motion the coming of Jesus long before time began, but he spent 1000s of years preparing the world for it, and when Jesus came, He waited 30 years before entering ministry, and no one knew who he was, except that he was a son of a carpenter. And guess what? It's only when he started ministry that he faced conflict. It's when he started his ministry that even the very ones. Who came that He came to save, rose up against him. They called him a blasphemer, the son of the devil and all kinds of stuff. And that conflict led to the cross. But Jesus was faithful in his calling to die a brutal death that we deserved, and to die on that cross and for the joy set before Him, He endured the shame of the cross. And here's what I want to tell you, because Jesus is faithful in his calling, you can be courageous in yours, because he was faithful to the point

of death and resurrection. You can be courageous in your calling, because this Christ lives in you. We are God's workmanship, where in Christ, Jesus and the endurance of Jesus is your courage, the faithfulness, the steady presence of Jesus is the courage you need. Christ is your courage. See if you're apart from Christ, start there. There's a God who is faithful to pain and to a cross with you in mind, Would you bow your heads with me, Father in this room? Would you breathe courage? Keep us in the waiting when we want to quit knowing that our waiting isn't wasted, but you are work in the midst of it, moving hearts today, to first see Jesus as Lord and Savior, and to surrender hearts and trust and in confident love in you, God, there's somebody in this room that needs to take a step of faith in a decision to follow Jesus, and they're realizing that you came for them, and it was us who nailed you to the cross, and it was our sins you paid. So may today be the day of new beginning and new life. God in fellowship with the God of the universe, because we have the God of heaven on our side for others in this room, God who are tired of the waiting, who are afraid of what is ahead of them, who are weary of the good doing. Holy Spirit. Will you breathe courage and strength build us up from the inside out, help us to keep our eyes on you, not on the conflict, not on the tension, not on the negativity, but to fix our focus on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Christ in us is the courage we need. So Father, breathe courage into the depths of our soul. We love you, Jesus. Thank you for these words, these words preserved for our learning and our reading. All this in the name of Christ, the one who calls us and the one who is faithful, we pray, and everybody said, together, amen, amen, amen. Thank you so much for being together today as we open up God's Word. God bless you.