

# **BOLDER**

It takes a village

## **Short Talk**

### **Be Strong & Courageous**

#### **Introduction**

##### ***Questions to ask the congregation:***

- What does it mean to be strong and courageous?
- Can you think of a time when you had to be strong? What did that look like?

There are moments when we may not feel very strong. It may be as simple as not been able to remove the lid from a jar because it is stuck firmly in place and no amount of twisting and turning seems to move it! You feel at a loss because you need that jar open but don't have the physical strength. (Well, a little tip – you can use a butter knife and gently slide it under the rim of the jar or use the knife to tap around the edge of the rim, and before you know it you will have the strength to open the jar – maybe!)

Life calls for moments of boldness, courage and strength. This doesn't change with age. No matter our age or stage in life, whether we are at school, university, work or retired, we are called to be bold and strong, and to live our lives courageously.

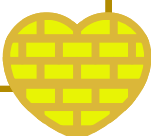
In the Bible we find Nehemiah who carried out a task boldly for God, and in so doing encouraged others to be part of the task. Everyone was needed, everyone had a part to play. There is an African proverb that says 'It takes a village to raise a child'. Well, the truth of the matter is that it takes a village to do anything! It took a village to build the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah heading up the workforce. So let's see what that story has to teach us:

#### **1. Be BOLDER**

Read Nehemiah 1:1-11, 'Nehemiah's Prayer'

Nehemiah heard the news that the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins and it caused him to weep. After he wept, he prayed. After he prayed, he received an answer ... and if you want to hear more, you'll need to read chapter two when you get home! It's a fantastic story that would make an amazing movie! You see, Nehemiah makes a very bold move. The first part of that bold move was knowing when the time was right to put his plan into action. Nehemiah was in exile in Susa in Babylon and was the cup bearer for King Artaxerxes. So, when he goes to the king, his face is sad due to the news of the broken walls. The king asks Nehemiah why he is sad. Nehemiah takes his opportunity to tell the king what's going on. But more than that, he also asks the king to allow him leave from his duties so he can help rebuild the walls. You could imagine this as asking for a long holiday from work when you have no more holiday to take! The Bible tells us that Nehemiah was afraid, but even his fear did not stop him asking for what he needed. He was bold, and because of his boldness Nehemiah was allowed to make the journey to Jerusalem to assess the walls.

Being bold can be hard, and making a bold move as Nehemiah did takes a lot of strength.



We have to be bold in standing up for what is right. We may not be called to rebuild the walls of a city, but we are called to make a difference. We may not have physical walls that have been set on fire, but there may be walls and barriers that need to be destroyed so that they can be rebuilt. Think for a moment about any walls that divide you from others. As a corps/church community, we are called to unity, not division. Do we need to boldly reshape our own views? How do we view other people in our community, our village, who may seem different from us? Remember it takes a village to do everything. All ages, all cultures, all views are needed.

Sadly, some who are older in years can feel that their view isn't needed any more. Yet being older means we have seen and experienced much. We have learnt much. Being older can often bring a gained wisdom and a heart of gratitude. No matter our age, we are called to be bold for Jesus.

What do you need to be bold about in your life, your church, your community, your neighbourhood? How can we encourage those who are older to live bolder lives in later life?

## **2. Be STRONGER**

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem came about by lots of 'clans' – families/groups who worked together using their skills to rebuild. There were so many gates that needed mending in the walls; Nehemiah speaks of ten but there may have been more. Each of these gates had a function and purpose. The gates needed to be strong and intact to protect the city and its people. There was a sheep gate, fish gate, valley gate, dung gate, fountain gate, inspection gates and more (Nehemiah 3).

Now before we move away from the gates, just think about all the different things that happen through or around those gates. We won't get too carried away with the dung gate, but it may have been quite smelly. As probably was the fish gate too! The thing is about the gates is that they let people and trade in and out, so they needed to be strong, durable and accessible.

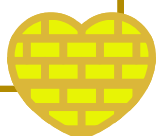
Rebuilding the walls and the gates brought strength and protection to the city, meaning that the people of Jerusalem were in a much stronger position. Even so, there were three prominent men who were mean and mocked Nehemiah and those rebuilding the walls – Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem (Nehemiah 2:19). But no amount of mocking could bring Nehemiah and the Israelites down. In Nehemiah 2:20 (NIV), we hear the response of Nehemiah to the taunts of these three men:

'The God of Heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.'

You see, even faced with opposition and a huge task, Nehemiah and the Israelites were stronger together and faced opposition together. Remember that saying again, 'It takes a village!'

Do we encourage strength? Do we want people to succeed, or have there been times when we have been opposed to others because we have felt we had it right and they had it wrong?

It may sound harsh, but if we aren't part of building up the Church (God's people), then we will have no share in the blessings of God in the building.



### **3. Be GOD STRONG – (Bolder and Older)**

Nehemiah knew that in his own strength he could not face the task ahead, which is why we heard his prayer in Nehemiah 1. Nehemiah was 'God strong'. He knew he needed God's people to help him as he couldn't accomplish anything on his own. So he gathered the people, the families, the groups of people who could work together to create something that meant they were all safer and stronger. Nehemiah was God strong, and he was bold.

As we grow in years, we need to strive and feel empowered to grow bolder day by day. In fact, we need to grow 'older and bolder!' Every day has the potential to be a day of learning and growing – growing in goodness, grace, wisdom, love and strength.

'It takes a village' is a wonderful saying that reminds us that when a child is born, it takes a village to grow and nurture that child. That child is blessed by the help and guidance of everyone in the village. That village needs to be a place of protection, a place of nurture, a place of peace. The walls of that village need to be strong and secure. We are all part of a 'village', and every part of the village needs people of different ages, different views, different strengths – but all united by one thing: the love and strength of God. What a beautiful village it will be when, united as God's people, we choose to grow older together in boldness and strength!

#### **Conclusion**

To recap:

- 1. BE BOLDER**
- 2. BE STRONGER**
- 3. GOD IS WITH YOU – GOD STRONG**

We may not have a dung gate or a fish gate to cross, but we do have a door to each of our corps/churches that needs to be open for anyone and everyone. Let's build bold, strong communities who keep others safe. Let's build bold and strong communities where listening to one another is at the centre of all discussions. Let's build bold, strong communities that want to celebrate one another, and let's all play our part in the 'village'. It takes a village, a whole village, and our village needs you. Be bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you.

#### **RESPONSE**

Give out sticky notes for people to write their names on and bring to the mercy seat as an act of wanting to be part of the village, the corps/centre/group that you are part of.

Suggested music to play as people respond and come forward to build a bold village:

***'Be Bold, Be Strong' song cover music video by Music and Creative Arts***

[www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/key-dates/international-day-older-people-2024](http://www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/key-dates/international-day-older-people-2024)

***'Walking in Faith and Victory'***

<https://samusicindex.com/brass/walking-in-faith-and-victory/9676>

