Don’t Give Up Your Dream

Rebuilding after exile, and refusing to lay down what God has called you to build

SPEAKER	Geno Hildebrandt
DATE	Sunday, June 28, 2020
PASSAGES	Ezra 4:1-5; Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 2:4-9; 1 John 2:15-17; Ezra 6:6-12; Zechariah 9:9; Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 13:1; 1 Corinthians 6:19
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:00:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

After the exile, the Jews rebuilt the altar and then the temple. Their neighbors first offered to “help” – which would have watered down their worship – and then stopped the work for years. But the prophets told them to be strong and build, God turned the emperor’s heart, and the temple stood. Whatever is grounded in the will of God abides forever, so do not let this season alter or steal your dream.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- After the coronavirus season, we will need to rebuild parts of our lives and our society.
- Don’t let circumstances alter your dream. The exiles refused partners who would have diluted their worship.
- Turn off the news now and then. Build your dream on the will of God, and it will last.
- Three things are surely God’s will: raising the next generation, providing for ourselves and our families, and serving the needs of others, including taking the gospel to the world.
- Don’t let circumstances steal your dream either. The temple work stopped for at least a decade, and still God made a way.
- Civil disobedience is serious: be very sure you are on the firm ground of God’s will, and ready to suffer for it.

- The rebuilt temple was where Jesus walked. God's plans for what we build in obedience go far beyond what we can see.

▶ 0:52:29

With eighteen or twenty people back in the sanctuary – "amazingly better than none" – Geno announced that outdoor worship on the lawn would continue at least through August. Then he named what was bothering him. When the coronavirus season ends, and it will, we will need to rebuild our lives and our society in ways that may not be huge but will be important.

Rebuilding after exile

▶ 0:53:43

So he turned to the books that tell how the Jews rebuilt after the destruction of 586 BC. They began with the altar (Ezra 3:1–3), restoring the sacrifices the law of Moses commanded. With the priests ministering again, the people began to feel like a nation. Then they started on the temple, perhaps fifty or sixty years after its destruction, and ran into trouble.

▶ 0:55:20

> "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, 'Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here.' But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses in Israel said to them, 'You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.'"
>
> EZRA 4:1–3 ↗

1. Don't let circumstances alter your dream

▶ 0:56:27

It sounds generous, Geno said, but they were not really offering to help so much as to alter the dream. These were peoples resettled from across the Assyrian Empire – later the Samaritans – with a "cafeteria religion": altars to many gods, no priesthood, no Torah. Joining them would have watered down the worship of God. The Jews wisely said no thanks. Geno applauded a brother in the room who had started a business during the pandemic: don't let the circumstances alter your dream.

▶ 0:57:51

We hear dire predictions – the economy will never come back, waves of pandemics will follow one after another. "Sometimes just turn the news off and quit buying into the fear-mongering." The economy runs in cycles, and after fifteen roaring years a downturn may have been coming anyway. Whatever comes, "we cannot live in fear. We cannot walk cringing." Build your dream on the foundation of the will of God, and it will last. Where does he get that?

▶ 0:59:38

> "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."
>
> 1 JOHN 2:15–17 ↗

Is your dream fundamentally tied to God's purposes on earth?

Three things that are surely God's will

▶ 1:00:48

Raise up another generation – have children and bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Not everyone will marry, but most will, and single people help the whole community raise the next generation; Hope's children's ministry has often had more single adults serving than married ones. If you are young and have someone willing to marry you, Geno said, "tie the knot." He and PJ had been invited to at least three weddings over Zoom – a horrible way to get married, "but it's better to marry over Zoom than to burn," with apologies to 1 Corinthians 7:9.

▶ 1:03:00

Provide for yourself and your family. For most that means a stage of preparation – education, skills, getting ready to start a business or a profession. To students stuck doing everything online: "Don't stop. Don't quit. Don't get discouraged." Whoever does not provide for his own household, Scripture says, is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8).

▶ 1:04:22

Serve the needs of others, and preach the gospel to the world. Geno was deeply concerned that young people who had hoped to serve overseas would conclude it was impossible now. "Please do not alter

your dream. Find a way around the obstacles." It would be a crying shame, and exactly what the enemy wants, for us to get discouraged and give up. "Start a ministry. Get ready and go overseas."

2. Don't let circumstances steal your dream

▶ 1:05:32

Worse than altering a dream is letting it be stolen.

> "Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia."
>
> EZRA 4:4–5 ↗

▶ 1:07:12

When the Jews refused to compromise, their enemies wrote to King Artaxerxes, and when his reply came they went to Jerusalem "and by force and power made them cease" (Ezra 4:23–24). The work stopped for at least ten years, perhaps twelve or fifteen. Rebuilding became an illegal act. And then the preachers got involved.

▶ 1:08:26

Geno paused for a caution, knowing many were listening: if you are going to practice civil disobedience against the government, "you better be sure what you're doing is grounded in the will of God." Haggai and Zechariah, two of the last of the twelve minor prophets, spoke into exactly this moment.

▶ 1:09:39

> "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not."
>
> HAGGAI 2:4–5 ↗

Mr. Governor, grow a backbone; Mr. High Priest, grow a spine; people of the land, get to work. Haggai reached all the way back to the covenant at the exodus. "Get up, go to work, don't be afraid, I am with you."

▶ 1:10:49

So can you oppose the emperor if you understand something to be God's will? "Be very careful, be very careful – but yes." Hear, though, that this was a clear word to the nation, one they were willing to suffer and die for. They were not just rebels. And behind it was the God who had brought Israel out from under Pharaoh, a despot interested only in crushing them. His will trumps the will of an angry tyrant. He did it once; surely he can do it again.

God made a way

▶ 1:12:25

> "Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them."
>
> EZRA 5:1–2 ↗

▶ 1:13:42

"Go, boys, go get them." When their enemies threatened another letter, the Jews said, fine – but tell the king to look up what Cyrus wrote. King Darius found Cyrus's decree and ordered the governors not only to get out of the way but to supply everything the Jews needed, and anyone who opposed them would be impaled on a beam from his own house (Ezra 6:6–12). "Don't ever, ever, never, ever give up on what God wants you to do. God will make a way where there is no way."

▶ 1:15:09

Geno was especially concerned for the high school and college seniors who lost their last weeks and their graduations. In our culture, he said, graduation is the bridge into adulthood, and that bridge had washed out. To them: "You're an adult, whether you got a graduation or not. We see you that way. I believe in you." Parents and friends should say so too. If you feel your dream has been stolen, ground it in the will of God and walk with him.

The latter glory

▶ 1:17:34

The temple they rebuilt is the Second Temple, where Jesus walked and ministered.
"The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give

Those prophets were looking down the road at plans they could only dream about – and God has plans for your life, too, especially for young people. Haggai is short and mostly an exhortation; Zechariah, the creative one, turns about halfway through to the future.

▶ 1:19:38

To people worn down and tempted to quit, he wrote, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!... Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9) – fulfilled when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. "They shall look on me, on him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him" (Zechariah 12:10), a day many believe is still to come for Israel.

> "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."
>
> ZECHARIAH 13:1 ↗

What the prophet could not see was that the fountain was for the whole world. "That's what we have in Jesus Christ, and that's the good news."

Living temples

▶ 1:22:03

What has God called you to build that you are sure is grounded in his will? A call to ministry or the mission field, marriage, children, a career, a business? If you see no way forward, keep pressing in and praying, "but don't lay it down." And since our bodies are now temples of the Holy Spirit, let us live as places where the Messiah dwells and shows himself to those far from God – "a touch point," on Zoom or on the front porch, where people find forgiveness, rescue and hope. "God isn't falling off his throne."

▶ 1:24:30

So let us persevere, not let our fears alter our God-given dreams, and run a steady race, trusting that our future is more glorious than our past and that God still wants to use us to bring salvation to many. Geno prayed that Hope's hopes would not rise and fall with the next edict from the governor or mayor, public health officials or economic indicators, but rest on the will of God and the good news that Jesus loved us and gave himself for us.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Ezra 3:1–3
- Ezra 4:1–3
- 1 John 2:15–17
- Ephesians 6:4 (KJV)
- 1 Corinthians 7:9
- 1 Timothy 5:8
- Ezra 4:4–5
- Ezra 4:23–24
- Haggai 2:4–5
- Ezra 5:1–2
- Ezra 6:6–12
- Haggai 2:9
- Zechariah 9:9
- Zechariah 12:10
- Zechariah 13:1
- 1 Corinthians 6:19

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. What will need rebuilding in your life, or our community, after a long disruption?
2. The exiles refused "help" that would have watered down their worship. Where might you be tempted to let circumstances reshape what God called you to?
3. Which of Geno's three categories – raising the next generation, providing for family, serving others – speaks most to a dream you carry?
4. The temple work stopped for at least ten years. How do you keep hold of a calling when it seems to have stalled?
5. How could you be a "touch point" of hope for someone far from God this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Geno Hildebrandt is Hope Chapel's senior pastor and, with PJ, has watched several couples marry over Zoom during the pandemic. In the summer of 2020 he led the church through outdoor worship on the lawn and a limited return to the sanctuary, and he teaches the first of Hope's parent-child dedication classes.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27_pq8MI8UY&t=0s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.