



Rebuild: Reset Your Life. Renew Your Church. Reshape Your World.

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Pastor and hip-hop artist Tommy Kyllonen faced a "rebuilding" journey when God led him to an abandoned Toys"R"Us building in inner-city Tampa and said, "Rebuild this into a church." Drawing on Nehemiah's example as the rebuild of Jerusalem's walls, Kyllonen reveals the struggles and joys that he, his family and his young urban, multiethnic church experienced as they pursued a seemingly impossible dream of restoration.

Rebuilding Will Stretch You

I never knew how hard rebuilding would actually be. That's why many people take the route of building something brand new or buying something brand new.

My rebuilding journey started at Crossover Church in 1996. I was fresh out of Bible college and built an urban youth ministry at a small church in Tampa. By 2002 the youth ministry grew to hundreds while the Sunday adult service struggled at around forty people. Several leaders of the church pushed me into stepping up to become the lead pastor and rebuild the church. I was reluctant to take it on as I was only in my twenties and I was a hip-hop artist signed to a national record label. But my wife and I felt God calling us to rebuild our church spiritually and physically. We began to make several changes within that first year. We stepped out of the box and did some things that had never been done before in church. There were people who said it would never work. It would never grow. It would never become self-sustainable. But something amazing began to happen at that little old rundown church building. Fast forward six years and we had physically rebuilt the entire campus and spiritually rebuilt so many lives we were bursting at the seams.

Our young urban church was crazy enough to relocate and take on a forty-three-thousand-square-foot build-out of a former Toys"R"Us building in Tampa's inner city. Sounds difficult, but when you add the fact that we undertook this project in the middle of a recession in one of the hardest hit cities in the country, it seemed virtually impossible. God had seemed to open up all the right doors, but soon we realized we were in way over our heads. It was beyond our experience, our wisdom and our resources. But sometimes this is exactly where God wants you. That's when he gets your full attention.

Just like our congregation, Nehemiah and his people had some naysayers. They told him it was impossible to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but he did it in just fifty-two days. I love Nehemiah's story. It's an epic journey of compassion, risk and miracles. It started many months before the actual fifty-two days, and the ongoing spiritual rebuilding lasted for years after the builders topped the walls. The thing that especially excites me about Nehemiah's story is that he didn't have the experience to lead, yet God used him. When God rebuilds us, he calls all of us to lead.

As you look through Scripture, you can regularly see how God uses the unlikely. He uses the underdogs. He uses ordinary people just like you and me to step up and lead things beyond what we'd ever dream or imagine. Maybe you feel like you are unworthy and God can't use you because you made too many mistakes. Maybe you feel you don't have enough talent or experience. Maybe you feel like it's too late. I'm here to tell you otherwise. If you've ever experienced any brokenness, then you need to keep reading. This book is designed to bring out the rebuilt leader in all of us. At the end of each chapter of *ReBuild*, you'll find questions that will help you think about practical next steps in rebuilding yourself, your

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BOOK EXCERPT

church and the world around you. We've also created some free resources on urband.org for your small group and your church, including videos, music, curriculum and sermon notes so you can take this rebuilding journey with others.

Rebuilding will stretch you. It can wreck you or make you stronger. Rebuilding your life, your church and your world will take you to places you never thought you would go. It will reveal things about you and those around you that you didn't know. It will expose the good, the bad and the ugly. The past few years of my life have been the most difficult but the most exciting, rewarding season I've ever had. If you are ready to experience some supernatural rebuilding, then pick up your hammer and your sword and let's go to work.

– Taken from the Introduction



AUTHOR BIO



Tommy "Urban D."

Kyllonen, author of *Rebuild: Reset Your Life. Renew Your Church. Reshape Your World.*

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"Tommy and I go way back, back to when he was tagging up my dorm room with a pencil, back to when I was just seventeen years old watching him in the Spanish choir, back to when we first met and he got me my first job at Shoney's. After all these years, one thing as always remains constant about him – his heart for God and his heart for people. I trust you will be blessed by his words and you will learn as much as I've learned from him."

– KJ-52, hip-hop artist

Tommy "Urban D." Kyllonen: Pastor, Hip-Hop Artist and Urban Ministry Coach

Tommy "Urban D." Kyllonen has been in full-time urban ministry for over nineteen years at Crossover Church in Tampa, Florida. Under his leadership as youth pastor and since 2002 as lead pastor, the church has grown from forty to over one thousand, and was recognized as one of America's most innovative churches by *Outreach* magazine. Tommy is also an internationally known hip-hop artist, author and urban ministry coach and speaker.

Tommy has released seven hip-hop albums as rapper "Urban D." He has performed and spoken at concerts and conferences across the United States as well as overseas in Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany and Nigeria. He is the author of *Next*, a resource for new believers from an urban context, and is the creator of *Un.orthodox*, which spans three types of media and includes a book, hip-hop album and film. His church, Crossover, is a multiethnic, multigenerational, economically diverse church in inner-city Tampa with the vision to specifically reach those influenced by urban/hip-hop culture.

Tommy is the founder of the Urban Coaching Network, a six-month webinar coaching experience for lead pastors and church planters in an urban, multiethnic context. He is also the founder of the Flavor Fest Urban Leadership Conference, which has trained over five thousand leaders in fourteen years. Tommy is the publisher of *S.O.U.LMAG*, which has become the voice of the Christian hip-hop community with a readership in the tens of thousands. The magazine recently launched a TV show, *S.O.U.LMAG TV*, which Tommy hosts on JUCE Network (formerly JCTV). He has also authored articles for *Relevant*, *Pastors.com*, *UYWI*, *Rapzilla.com* and the American Bible Society. He lives in Tampa with his wife Lucy and two young daughters.

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