



Message Transcript

Covenant Renewal

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Father in heaven, we just thank you so much for who you are, Lord, we do thank those who gave the ultimate price of giving their lives so that we can experience the freedom in our nation that we have. May we take every opportunity to live as free citizens, as american citizens, and honor you with every opportunity that we have. Lord, we also thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ, who came and paid the ultimate price, who died on a cross so that we could be completely free of sin, of death, and of the devil. And we're here to give you honor today. We thank you for your living and active word, Lord, because we as a people believe that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you are speaking.

So our prayer this morning is speak, Lord, for we are ready to hear. And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to you, who will believe what he says and who will, by faith, put into practice what he tells you. Will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen. Amen. Have you ever felt hopeless in your christian walk?

The gospel is that Jesus Christ came, that he died on a cross for all your sins, that he rose from the dead. And through repentance and faith, you can have all your sins forgiven. You can be given a new identity through new birth. You have a new title

as a saint. You own all the truth of who God says you are.

And yet, for many believers, they still struggle and feel like I'm no different than I was when I first accepted Christ. What's really changing about me? And the longer that you walk, you can go to church week after week. You can get in a cadre. You can serve at our church.

You can do any number of things only to find that you're frustrated. And you can leave on a Sunday, and you can take all sorts of notes, and you can say, I want to live for Jesus, and I want to do it his way. And things need to change. But you find that it's not changing as quickly as you thought it would change. And then you begin to hear that little lie in your head that says you're never going to change.

You're really not that different anyway. Maybe it didn't take, or maybe you're not as successful solid as you thought you were. And then you begin to get hopeless on the inside. And then you begin to think thoughts like this. Well, everybody sins and I sin, and what's the big deal anyway?

And, oh, by the way, Jesus is coming back soon anyway, so what difference does it make? And hey, have you seen our culture? I mean, for 35 years, since being a believer, we've been praying for revival. In my whole lifetime, I've been praying for revival. I've read stories of revival.

I read my Bible and see revival, and I haven't seen it happen in my lifetime. What's the point anyway? I mean, is God really going to do anything? Or are we just in motion just trying to do things day by day, just trying to get by in hopes that when we get to heaven, God will say, well done, good and faithful servant. Well, I got good news for you.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. He has never changed. Everything that you read about in his word, he still is doing and wants to do. And what's moved is not God, it's us. And how is it that we can renew our covenant with him?

Because God's always faithful to his promises. We're the ones that turn our

back. And as we've been studying in the book of Jeremiah, as we've been taking a look at what it looks like for a God given vision, when Jeremiah leaves his cupbearer for the king in Persia and comes and helps rebuild the wall, and Jerusalem's walls that have been down for 130 plus years are now rebuilt, and the people are starting to come together and they're wanting to put God at the center. They're wanting to know, how is it we can renew this covenant? How can we get this right with God, not only for us, but for what's coming after us.

If you ever wanted to know how to experience God presently and make a difference for the future, I believe that God has a word for you. I want you to open up your bibles this morning to Nehemiah, chapter ten. Nehemiah, chapter ten. And as you turn there, we're going to talk this morning about four different ways that you can renew your relationship with God, that we can experience covenant renewal with him. If you're stagnant, if you're stressed, if you're bored, if you're thinking, I don't know how to get encouraged again, God has a word for you.

At the end of chapter nine, you remember as they came together to become a more God centric culture. It says in verse 38 of chapter nine. Now, because of this, we are making an agreement in writing and on the sealed document are the names of our

leaders, our levites and our priests. So they're going to sign a covenant. And here's the reality.

As you read through the names of this covenant, which I'm going to attempt again, as we do so many genealogies here, you need to understand the first truth that you need to see when it comes to covenant renewal is that covenant renewal starts by taking a stand now for future generations. It's taking a stand now for future generations. One of the biggest lies of the devil is get started tomorrow, do it next week, do it a year from now, take a stand now for future generations. And here's who signed the document. Notice what it says in chapter ten.

Now, on the sealed document were the names of Nehemiah, the governor, the son of Hecaliah. We've been reading about him. We know he's now the governor. He's the first person we read about, of course, because now he's leading the people. And now we're going to read about the priests.

It says in Zedekiah, Sariah, Azariah, Jeremiah, Pashur, Amariah, Malchesh, Hattush, Shebaniah, Malak, Haram, Meromuth, Obadiah, Daniel, Ginathon, Baruch,

Meshulam, Abijah, Majimin, Meziah, Bilgi, Shemaiah. These were the priests. Now, don't you love it that Jesus picked Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? I mean, these are the priests, right? And what we're seeing here is the first people that are gonna sign the covenant are the spiritual leaders of the community.

They're gonna go forward and they're gonna say, we're in with God. Now, why is that so important? Because we falsely assume that everybody that's a pastor or everybody that's serving Christ genuinely loves Christ, and that's just not true. These people are renewing their heart before God, saying, we wanna get this right. If we're gonna lead your people and be the spiritual leaders of your people, we're going on record of telling you we wanna make sure we're doing it your way.

We, as your spiritual leaders, want to minister the way you want. Minister, we want to honor you the way that you want honored. We want to lead your people in your way. Because they don't belong to us. They belong to you.

They're the people of your pasture and the sheep of your hand. So the priests, 22 priests, in addition to Nehemiah, signed this document. Then we're going to read

about 17 Levites. And the Levites were ones who helped with the worship of God. And notice who they are, verse nine.

And the Levites Jeshua, the son of Azaniah, Benui, the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel and also their brothers, Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kalita, Peliah, Hanan, Micah, Rahab, Hash Baniah, Zakkur. Sorry, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, Hodiah, Bani, Beninu. These were the Levites. These were the ones that were helping with the worship. Now, why is that important?

Why do you need to know that? Because God doesn't just look at the spiritual leaders. He looks at all that are serving his body, and he recognizes it. When we're saved, the Bible says we're written our Names written in the Lamb's book of life. It's permanent.

It's there. It's who we are. But God not only recognizes who you are, he recognizes what you do. And he's recording in his eternal word that these were the ones that said, we're going to help with the worship. We're going to help provide the priests with what they need to serve all of God's people.

How you serve God's church matters. God sees what you do. God sees how you serve. And these were ones that were saying, God, we want to do it your way. We also want to honor you.

We want to lead the way you want led. We want to do what you want done so that your name gets honored. And so you have 22 priests and 17 Levites. And now you're going to have 44 leaders. Notice verse 14, the leaders of the people.

Parosh. Perahath. Moab. Elam. Zatu bani.

Booni. Asgad. Bibi. Adonijai. Big vi, adon.

Adar. Hezekiah. Azur. Hodia. Hashem.

Bezai. Haruh. Anathoth. Nebai. Magpiash.

You like that name if you're having a child? Maybe. Magpiash.

Meshulam. Hezer. Meshizabel. Zadok. Jadua.

Pelatiah. Hanan. Ananiah. Hoshea. Hananiah.

Hashub. Halohesh. Pilha. Shobuk. Rehum, hashabana.

Messiah. Ahaya. Hannah, anand, malak, haram Bana. And those of your
graduating class for 2024. Now, why is this important?

Because all the leaders matter. So this isn't just spiritual leaders that are getting together. It's not just happening in the temple. It's all of God's presence. People saying, we want God to be present in our community.

And here's what you happen. Here's what you have. You have 84 men who sign a document saying, we want God central in our community. And what happens when you get 84 men in a community saying, we want God in our community? Things begin to change.

John Wesley once said, give me 100 men that love nothing but God and hate nothing but sin, and it is finished. I say it all the time. So go the men, so go the church. So goes the church, so goes the world. Men are called all throughout the Bible to rise up.

And when men rise up the way God calls men to rise up, women rise up. Wives rise up. Children rise up. Everybody does better. But so often the devil lies to men and says, you don't need to do anything.

Church is a woman's job. Devotions are a woman's job. Let the women lead the family spiritually. And that's why we're in the mess that that we're in. Amen.

Israel understood this, and that's why when they're coming back together after 130 years of devastation, what are they saying? We don't want that anymore. We want to do it your way. So the men of the culture are leading out, saying, we'll go on record. We'll make a vow before you.

We'll put this in writing. We'll make this in ink. We'll make sure God, that you know our heart before you is to put you in the center, and you do whatever it takes to make sure that we're honoring you. And that's what God wants in our culture, too, where we prioritize him, where we put him first. And it's not just for us, because so often, when it comes to the body of Christ, we always ask questions like this.

How does this benefit me? How does this church benefit me? What's in it for me? Do I like the songs? Do I like the pastor?

Do I like the people? I hate to tell you this. There is blessing and benefit for being part of the local church. But it wasn't designed for you. It was designed for Christ.

Jesus said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. When you begin to realize that the church has been established as the most important vehicle on the planet to honor the Lord Jesus Christ and to advance his kingdom, and you begin to prioritize that, everything begins to change, and then you realize, I'm not here for just me. I'm here because God's gifted me to serve other people. And I'm not even here just for this generation. But I'm here so I can pass the baton off to the next.

And for generation after generation after generation, I believe that baton's been bobbled or dropped. And that's why we see the things that we see, and that's why our culture is so antithetical to the gospel of Jesus Christ. So what we need to do is we need to go back if we're gonna get this thing started and we're gonna get right with the Lord. We need to take a stand now for future generations. I need to become a contributor, not just a consumer.

I need to be asking how, God, now that you've saved me, can I contribute my best to you? And that's what these men were saying. These men were going on record. They were signing a document. They were renewing a covenant.

They were saying, God, you've always been faithful to your promise. Promise says, we haven't been faithful, and we want to make it right. Our fathers and our grandfathers and our great grandfathers, they haven't done it the way you've wanted. But starting here, starting right now, we wanna do that. And that's the blessing of the gospel.

The blessing of the gospel is not go back and fix all your past. The blessing of the gospel is when you hear Christ, start now, start today, and through his blood, we get a fresh start. Amen. Covenant renewal starts by taking a stand now for future generations. What we do now has impact on the next generation.

Number two is this. Covenant renewal also starts by building strong, godly families that are set apart. Covenant renewal starts by building strong, godly families

that are set apart. Notice, verse 28. Now, the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God.

So who's involved now? Everybody's involved. Not everybody got to sign the covenant, but everybody's saying, we want in. We're a gatekeeper. We want in when people are going and coming from our city.

We want to be part of this. No matter what role I play in society, I want to be a part of what God's doing. And guess what? Here's the good news. God wants you to be a part of what he's doing.

No matter what your vocational call is, no matter what your lot in life is, no matter what your socioeconomic background is, God wants you to be involved. And what were they doing? They were separating themselves unto God. That's what the text says. They were separating themselves unto God.

I mean, I'll read it again. It says, and the people separated them. They separated themselves from the people of the lands to the law of God. What does that mean? It means they weren't listening to what the culture was saying.

They wanted to obey what God said they needed to obey that was not only a big deal in the time of Nehemiah, that's a huge deal in our time. You cannot live the christian life and embrace what our culture embraces because it's antithetical to everything Jesus Christ is about. So what do they do? They separated themselves from the culture. It didn't mean they removed themselves from it because they had to live in it.

But their ideology changed because they were going to live different than the culture that they lived in and they were separating themselves under the law of God, meaning God. Whatever you say we need to do, and however you say we need to live, that's how we want to live. Now here's the question. What was their building block for doing it? Who did it?

The Bible's going to tell us, notice this. It says their wives, their sons and their daughters. You know what they call that? That's a family. The family is the primary building block for everything that God wants done in our society.

And notice this. And all those who had knowledge and understanding that means they knew the word and they were understanding what they were supposed to do, are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given through Moses, God's servant, and to keep and observe all the commandments of God our Lord, and his ordinances and his statutes. So they're signing this and saying, God, here's how serious we are. When we read your word in Leviticus 26, deuteronomy 28, we read about all the blessings and the curses. May you bring them all down on us if we don't live the way you want to live.

Now, the way Israel was set up as a nation was with blessings and curses. And here's why. Because God wanted them to be a light to all the other nations. Israel was to be the place where all the other nations of the world would be blessed. And here's what God said.

If you obey me, I will bless you so much that when all the other nations around the world look at you and see how you're living, they will say, we want to live like that. Because whoever their God is, we want that kind of blessing. But if you disobey me, I will punish you so badly that when all the other nations around the world look at you, they will say, you don't want to act like that because their God's the most powerful God and we don't want that to happen to us. And here's what God was saying. No matter what you do.

I'm gonna get all the glory through you. And here's what they were saying. We love you so much, and we want you to be honored so much that if we're doing something off, we welcome the curses in our life, because we wanna know that we need to turn from them and turn back to you. God, we know your word is good. We know your standards are good.

You gave the ten Commandments to Moses. We know that if we obey your word, we'll be blessed. We want your blessing. We want your presence. And you remember when Moses was taking the children of Israel from Egypt to the promised land?

Remember what he told God? When God said, you're going to go here. And what did Moses say? I'm not going unless you go with us. If you go, we'll go.

If you're not going, I don't want to go. I just want you. That's what this people is saying. After 130 years of a devastated wall and being the reproach to all the other nations, they've come back, rebuilt the wall. They're experiencing God's presence.

And now they're saying, we not only want God's presence now, we want it in every future generation. We'll do it your way. We'll recommit to your word, we'll recommit to your standards, and we'll do what you want us to do. That's what they were saying. We'll obey all the statutes.

We'll obey all the commands. And isn't that similar to what Jesus Christ said after he rose from the dead? Before he left the earth? What did he say? All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And what? And teaching them to obey everything or all that I've commanded you, and I'll be with you always to the end of the age, how much were they to command? How much were they to keep? All of it.

All of it. And that's what they're saying here. They're saying, we want every bit of your fullness, God. We want to do it your way. We don't want to miss out on any little part.

And why is this a big deal? Because family is the unit that God blesses. If you're living as a christian family, you will look different than other families that you hang out with, children. If you have christian parents, the worst argument you can ever make is, well, so and so's parents said. Because as a christian parent here's going to be the response you get.

I don't care what so and so's parents said. This is what God says. I'm responsible to God and how I raise you. The problem we have in a lot of christian families, and by the way, there's no perfect family. My family's not perfect, your

family's not perfect.

We just want to grow in godliness. The problem in many christian families is parents. You want to be best friends with your kids when they're kids, be best friends with your kids when they leave your house. You can't parent them and be their best friend at the same time. They need somebody leading them in the ways of the Lord.

Amen. And we need strong families. And that's why there's always been an attack on the family since the garden of Eden. God's the one who created gender, God's the one who created marriage, and God's the one who created family. So why is there an attack on gender, marriage and family?

Because it's God's idea and Satan hates it. Amen. That's why the government will say, no, no, no, we can take your kids away and we can give them gender surgery and we don't even need to tell you because your kids belong to us. Oh, no, they don't. They belong to God.

Amen. And the family is the most important unit and the most important building block for the next generation of disciples, because the purpose of marriage is for that. It's for propagating the next generation of godly offspring that live for Jesus Christ. Amen. And that's what they're seeing.

They're saying, we haven't done that because our forefathers were unfaithful and they passed down unfaithfulness. And they passed down unfaithfulness, but it stops with us. And here's the beauty of it. The beauty of this is you can break generational curses all over the place, over your family, no matter what. Yeah, but my parents were divorced.

Yeah, but you don't have to be. Yeah, but my parents didn't live for the Lord. You can. Yeah, but every one of my uncles always struggled with pornography and all this. It can end with you.

I mean, you don't have to go down the same way that your family does and then make excuses for all the sins you're going to sin the same way. It can stop right here

through your family, and you can confess and you can repent and you can do it God's way. Why? Because when you see your children grow up in the Lord. It's a great joy.

That's why in third John, chapter three and verse four, the apostle says, I have no greater joy than this to hear of my children walking in the truth. Now I realize whether you're talking to dads or whether you're talking to moms, being a dad can be thankless. Being a mom can be thankless because why? Because you invest so much time and so much energy and you're doing so many little things and you're doing it all the time and nobody seems to notice. But I got news for you.

God notices everything. He sees it all. And every little investment that you make in every listening ear and every emotional conversation and every investment in your child in any possible way pays huge dividends down the road. If you're living for Christ as you go, and it doesn't mean that you get to set your kids future. Some of you have done it well and you still have kids that go wayward.

And I'm telling you, you don't need to feel guilt. You're responsible for just bringing them before the Lord and doing it God's way. That's all you can do. You can't

convert a heart. You can't make your children believe.

You can't even convert yourself. But you can be responsible for how you bring children before the Lord and what you model for them. And this is what you see here. You're seeing that they're building strong, godly families that are set apart. What does that mean?

It means you model Christ. You model Christ. When your kids see that Jesus Christ is a priority to you, then maybe it'll be a priority to them. Now, I grew up in a different culture than what's going on today. When I grew up playing sports, we didn't play sports on Sunday.

If you played baseball, there may have been like 16 games in the summer. Now you have it 72 games in the summer. And you got to travel to different states and do all these things, and parents are conflicted and they're torn. Like, you know, how's my son going to make the major leagues and how's he going to make the NFL if he doesn't play in these leagues? He's not going to make the MLB or the NFL, so don't worry about it.

Anyway, number one. And number two, if he is, he's good enough to not have to play on Sundays. And here's the reality. Here's the reality. If you take seven years out of your kid's life to play sports on Sunday, you've taught them that sports is more important than Jesus.

And I promise you, Jesus is going to be there longer than their sports is. It's a fact. But if they're that gifted and God gifted them, and you prioritize Jesus, they'll still end up excelling and be the fullness. But when they do, they'll be a model of what Jesus wants them to be when they do it. And yet, here's what we do.

We buy into the culture, and the culture says. And the culture says, well, here's what we do. If you live as a christian family, people will think you're weird. Cause you're gonna make decisions that don't look like everybody else. And it's uncomfortable to be a parent, and it's uncomfortable to lead your kids when everybody else is doing it some other way.

Friends, to be a Christian in any culture at any time always looks weird and different. We read through the Bible, and we love that John the Baptist was who he was, and he was a proclaimer. The brother ate wild locusts and honey and wore camel skins in the desert. He was weird. I mean, you look at all the.

Everybody's different when you live for the Lord. I'm not asking you to change your personality, but under the lordship of Jesus Christ, live completely for him, and you'll see how different you actually are. But friends, let's pray for one another. Let's build one another up. Not that we have perfect families.

There's no perfect dads. There's no perfect mothers. There's no perfect husbands, there's no perfect fathers, no perfect kids. But let's grow in it. And children, here's a verse for you.

In case you were coming to church today, wondering if you should listen to your parents, here's the first commandment with a promise. Honor your father and mother that it'll go well with you and you'll live long on the earth. Children, obey your parents in everything. So if your mom and dad told you, do it, do it. Unless they're telling you, join

a cult, get drunk, smoke weed.

You don't have to do something immoral. But if you're like, why? And they say, because I said so. That's why. And obey it.

Because when God sees that you can submit to authority, even when it's not comfortable, he can bless your life in a greater measure. Amen. Build strong, godly families that are set apart, even when you look, ladies, at proverbs, chapter 31, which is an awesome text about this incredible woman who apparently, like, owned a gym and was a real estate agent and, you know, rose up early in the morning, she's sewed late at night. I mean, this incredible woman. Everything is in the context of her family and what she did for her family and her kids are rising up and calling her blessed.

And her husband also praises her and say, many women do noble things, but you outclass them all. Where was her heart? In the home. Where should our heart be? In the home.

Your greatest disciples are your children. Build them. Amen. So we're going to take a stand now for future generations. We're going to build strong, godly families.

Number three is this covenant. Renewal starts by desiring to submit to all of God's word. Desiring to submit to all of God's word, not just part of it. As we walk along as christians for a while, we learn how to handle the things that are the biggies, you know, don't swear, don't have illicit sex, don't get. Don't get drunk, don't smoke weed, even though you can't in Colorado, it's probably not good.

Don't do that because then the church is going to have something. But we miss the smaller points. Don't gossip about somebody. Don't listen to gossip when somebody else is gossiping. Honor your mom and dad.

Bear one another's burdens. I mean, all the different things that we're instructed to do, well, that's not that big of one. They're all big, and we want to obey them all. And notice what happens here when they're saying they want to obey at all. Verse 30, it says, and that we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.

As for the people of the land who bring wares or any grain, that means they're bringing goods on the Sabbath day to sell. We will not buy from them on the Sabbath or a holy day, and we will forego the crops the 7th year and the exaction of every debt. So here's what they're saying. God, you set the Sabbath. You told us to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

So on the Sabbath, we're going to honor you. If people bring goods to sell outside of Israel, we're not going to purchase from them. We don't want to do it, right. No chick fil a, no hobby lobby, we're not going Sabbath day. Amen.

So they're saying, we're not going to do that. We're going to give this day to you. Now, how does this translate into a New Testament believer. It means this. Take one day a week and set it aside completely for the Lord.

I can't do that. Then you're too busy and your priority is off. The God of the

universe who created everything in six literal days and rested, the God who created you, the God who loved you so much he sent his son to die for you. The God who rose from the dead, the God who opened your eyes to see the gospel, the God who welcomed you into his family through repentance and faith, the God who's going to present you faultless before his father with an exceedingly great joy in heaven, the God who's going to let you spend eternity with him. You don't have what now do you see what I'm saying?

It's not a have to. It's a desire for. It's a hunger for, it's a want to. It's. I get to.

If you're in church, you're like, oh, the pastor's making us do this. Or, I hate when they talk about that topic. That's because your heart is off. Because if you have a heart for God, it's pastor, tell me everything. Let me hear the whole word.

I want to know what to do. I need to, I want to reorient every little fine place. I want to fine tune my life so I can be in alignment with Jesus, so I can be doing what he wants, because I want to have more of my life aligned with him. And that's not legalism, that's holiness, that's a desire for God. Amen.

And we want to have a hunger for that. So they're saying even on the 7th year, remember what God said on the 7th year. On the 7th year, don't grow crops, don't work. Take the year off. Now, some of you need to get a job and not take that too literal.

Take the year off. Don't plant crops. I got you store up for six years. I got you on the 7th. Anybody owes you money on the 7th year, if they still owe you, forgive them.

If you have any slaves that are working for you, you know, you can let them go free or they can choose to continue to serve with you. But we're releasing all this. They say, God, we want to do every fine point of the law that you have established. That's what we want to do. We want to do it your way, whether we feel like it or not.

Because you know what happens in the church, we hear truth and we're like, yeah, I'm just not convicted about that. Yet I just don't feel like that one yet. It doesn't matter whether you are convicted or whether you feel it. If the word says it, we do it. I

mean, that's what the Bible teaches.

It's not subject to our feelings. Truth is not subject to our feelings. Despite what our culture thinks, truth is truth. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.

And this is what we see here. We want to walk in the truth, and here's the reality of God's law. God doesn't give us the law to say don't. He gives us a law to say, don't hurt yourself. He gives us a law to say, this is good.

This is really good for you. I love how in one John five three, the apostle says it, for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. Keeping his commandments are not a dragon. Keeping his commandments are a blessing.

And this is how you know that someone loves God. Because if you were to walk

out of our church today and ask people, meet them at the mall, meet them at a game, do this. Hey, do you love God? Most people. Oh, I love God.

I think I love God. Here's how you know if someone loves God. It's not a feeling. It's a fact. Jesus answered in John, chapter 14, verse 23.

He said, if anyone loves me, this is how you know somebody loves Jesus. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him. So here's how you know that you love Jesus. You keep his word. You obey his commands.

You do what he asks you to do. That's how you love God. That's the litmus test. Jesus said, he who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word which you hear is not mine, but the father who sent me.

So when you meet somebody and say, well, they don't keep his word, that means this. They don't love God. Because if you love God and don't keep his word,

you will feel conviction on the inside, so severe that will cause you to confess, that will cause you to repent. And you'll pray some authentic prayer like this. Lord, forgive me again, Lord, I don't want to be this.

Lord, that is not who you created me to be. And I'm wrong, and you're right. And, Lord, change me, because I'm a saint and I'm not living like a saint, I'm living like my past, and I got caught up in this again. But, Lord, I thank you for your forgiveness all over, but I don't want to stay there. I want to stay here.

Thank you for your forgiveness. Not, oh, well, everybody sins not. Why are you judging me? You're a sinner, too. Nothing like that, right?

Somebody that loves God desires to keep his word. Somebody, they don't keep it perfectly, but they keep it increasingly. Amen. Now, notice this. Back in Nehemiah ten, we glossed over this just a little bit, but I wanted to make a point of it.

Notice what he says in verse 30 in the center of all of this family and keeping the word it says, and we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons. We're not going to intermarry with other faiths ever. We're not going to give our daughters away to people that don't serve our God. And we're not taking daughters from someone that doesn't serve God to give to our sons. Why?

Because they understood that marriage is not about your happiness. Marriage is about honoring the Lord. And you can't be unequally yoked with an unbeliever and have that, because the purpose of marriage is not just so you can have sexual intimacy without guilt. The purpose of marriage is so that you can honor one another as the mystery of showing how Christ gave his life for us and propagate a family so that you can make future disciples. That's why all the way through the word.

Children are what? A blessing and an inheritance from the Lord. Blessed is the man that has a quiverful. In case you're wondering, should we have any more kids? Yes, you should.

First commandment in the Bible, be fruitful and multiply. Yeah, but don't you look

at the world? Don't you see? That's why we need more godly kids for the next generation. Amen.

And men, listen to me. Listen to me, young men. Marriage is not so that you look around and you date this one and then this one and then this one. You got to find the perfect one. That's the perfect match.

No, there's no perfect woman out there, and you know that because you're not perfect. Find someone who's godly. Find someone who's lovely. Find someone who serves, and then go pour your life out for her and show her what Jesus looks like with skin on. Produce children and raise them in the knowledge of the Lord.

When. When you're of age 20 something, maybe you don't need to live in your parents basement until you're 40, playing video games, and then wake up and then say, maybe I should do it now. The culture says, don't do it. Don't get married. It's too hard.

It's wrong. No. Marriage is a blessing. When you have two people that love Jesus, it's a blessing. Now.

It can be heavenly sandpaper at times. God wants it to be that way. That's why every couple that gets married will say, after being together for a while, we're totally opposite. We couldn't be more opposite. Of course you are.

That's God's design for you. You need each other to become the fullness of what God wants you to be. Amen. But don't be unequally yoked with a non believer. Clarify.

Clarify. You're dating somebody that's a non believer, just break up with them right now. Amen. Let me tell you why. Let me tell you why.

Oh, she's so hot. You won't care in five years. I've done enough marriage counseling for someone that's a believer who's married to a non believer to know it's hell on earth. It's hell on earth. And because God believes in the permanence of

marriage, here's what he'll say, then.

Serve them. You don't want that. You want a partner that's going after Jesus the same way you're going after Jesus. Marriage has enough challenge of its own. You don't want that to be the core of your challenge.

You don't. And there's a number of people here that could tell you today who have been through that, who are going through that or have been through a divorce that would say, amen. Don't do it. I did it. We'll work it out when we get married.

No, you won't. You think there's issues now multiply that by a factor of infinity when you get married. That's how it works. Date believers. There's so many guys, I'm telling you, there's so many godly women that are just here that are just waiting for one of you to step up and say, I'll pursue you, and I'll pursue the Lord, and we can make a great life together.

Amen, ladies.

And guess what? There's forgiveness for all these things. If you've been through a divorce, it's not that you live in shame for the rest of your life. God is gracious. He's good.

He can forgive. He can redeem. He does all that. But you can avoid a lot of pain of going through all that if you just take him at his word when you're dating. That you only date believers makes all the difference in the world.

Amen. So don't be unequally yoked. And it goes beyond marriage. If you're doing a business deal or different things, you better look into the heart and make sure our values are the same and the reason we're doing it's the same, or you're going to run into the same kind of trouble. So, desire to.

Desire to submit to all of God's word, you say, well, how am I going to learn it? Well, you can be in a church that teaches the whole counsel of God like ours, or you

can read it for yourself. You can study it for yourself. You can listen to others that are teaching it. Why?

Because the grass withers and the flowers fade. But the word of our Lord stands forever. The word of the Lord is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. So the man of God may thoroughly equip every good work that you do. Oh, but Pastor Jeff, that's just a bunch of men that made up that book.

No, it's not. Two, Peter 120 says, but know this, first of all, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever made by an act of a human will. But men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God. This is God's word.

He used men. He used their personalities. He used their penmanship as he spoke to them. But this is God speaking his word. Amen.

So submit to it. Submit to all of it. I've told you my story several times. I might

have told it last week. I mean, early on in my christian life, when I'd read the Bible, I would get mad and shut it because I felt so horrible on the inside.

I'm like, I'm not doing any of this stuff. And I didn't realize it was God in my life giving me conviction about ways I wasn't living. And he loved me enough to show me that I have. People ask me sometimes, am I even a Christian? I'm so conscious of my sin.

That's a great sign that you're a Christian. If you're not ever convicted of anything, that would be a time you need to examine yourself and make sure you're in the faith. Because I find that the more I walk with the Lord, the more he educates me down to the finer points. Amen. And let me give you this fourth, one, covenant renewal, or getting right with God, starts by faithfully serving and generously supporting the household of God.

Faithfully serving and generously supporting the household of God. Not faithfully attending, not faithfully sitting there, not coming when you can, but faithfully serving and generously supporting the household of God. Notice, verse 32. We also placed

ourselves under obligation to contribute yearly one third of its shekel for the service of the house of God. So they're going to give some money for the service of the house of God.

One third of a shekel. Earlier on it was supposed to be a half shekel. Clearly here, because they're just forming a new community. They do not have the resources that they want to add, and they're going to give what they can give. And what are they giving it for?

Verse 33. For the show bread, for the continual grain offering, for the continual burnt offering, the sabbaths, the new moon, for the appointed times, for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel and all the work of the house of God. What are they going to give to? We want to make sure that everything that God wants done in his house is done, and we see ourselves as responsible to making sure it all gets done. So you can count on us for that.

If the church doesn't have what it needs, you count on us. All of us are going to be contributors. We're not just takers. We're going to make sure that. We're making

sure that God, everything you want done in your house count on us.

We're going to make sure that we provide it. So they're going to be there, and they're going to give notice. Verse 34. Likewise, we cast lots for the supply of wood among the priests, the Levites and the people, so that they might bring it to the house of our God. According to our father's households, at fixed times annually, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law, and that they might bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all the fruit of every tree to the house of the Lord annually.

You remember in the old Testament there was a whole sacrificial system that was designed to atone for or cover over sin until the Messiah came. So all of this was just covering over buckets and buckets of blood every year, cover over cover over, never cleansed. But when Jesus came, he came to cleanse us from all our sin once and for all. He died so that that sacrificial system was laid to rest because all that did was cover over so that God was willing to forgive it. So once a year, they had the day of atonement.

All the time they were sacrificing goats and bulls and all sorts of animals. Buckets and gallons and oceans of blood were spilled because people continued to sin. But when Christ came, perfection, shed his blood on the cross, and once for all, he died for all sin. Amen. But they were saying at the time, we need our sins forgiven.

We need our sins atoned for. We need our sins covered. The Messiah hasn't come yet. We're going to make sure that the temple has everything the temple needs so that we can go through the way you've established worship to make sure that our sin is atoned for. We want that, and that's what they're doing.

And then notice what they're going to do next. We just read they're going to bring the first fruits of the ground and the first fruits of all, the fruit of every tree to the Lord annually. What are first fruits? Anybody know? It's their best.

It's their best fruits. First fruits doesn't just mean the first fruits. It wasn't as if they were praying like, I hope the first apples on the tree stink. We'll take all those to God and then we'll keep the rest. First fruits meant, out of all the fruit we get, we're taking God our best fruit.

That's what first fruit is. You remember in the book of Malachi, they were bringing God all the leftovers and wondering why God wasn't blessing them. First fruit means God. You get my best out of all that I have before I use anything. For me, that's what first fruits means.

And notice what he goes on to say. And bring near to the house of God the firstborn of all sons and cattle, and the firstborn of all herds and our flocks. As it is written in the law for the priests who are ministering in the house of God, we will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine, the oil, to the priests at the chambers of the house of God. And the tithe. Tithe simply means this.

Tithe is 10th. Tithe is a 10th. You can't tithe 4%, you can't tithe 12%. You can't tithe 32%. A tithe is a 10th.

Okay. And the tithe of the ground to the LeVites. For the Levites are they who

received the tithes. In all the rural towns. The priest the son of Aaron shall be with you.

The Levites. When the LeVites receive tithes, and the LeVites shall bring up the 10th of the tithe to the house of God and the chambers of the storehouse, not only are they going to give first fruits, they're going to tithe to the Lord. They're going to bring a 10th. Now, why do we read about all this stuff? Why do we read about the dough and the cattle and all that?

They're saying out of everything we have, God gets a 10th of our best. We see this with Melchizedek in the old Testament, when Abraham meets him and he tithes to him, he gives him a tent, right? We see that Israel was required to give a tithe to the house of God. And then they had different festivals every single year and different things. And if you study Israel, you realize they gave about 23 and a third percent every single year to God.

That's what was required. Now, here's what we think. Because we're new Covenant believers, right? We're new Covenant. We don't have to do that.

That's like Old Testament stuff. Praise God. Jesus came so we can give less, right? I mean, think about this. In the Old Testament, what was the command?

You shall not. What? Shall not murder. New Testament, you should not even think that your brother is an idiot or you've committed murder in your heart. So if you've driven in Denver, you're guilty.

By the way, just as a side note, I saw one of you cut me off in Boulder about two months ago with a big brave sticker on your car.

And I don't think you meant it, but my kids were in the car saying, dad, catch up and wave. Catch up and wave, right?

You're forgiven.

Old Testament, do not commit adultery. You say, I got that one. New Testament, you look lustfully upon a woman that's not your wife who committed adultery in your heart, you're guilty. Old Testament, 23 and a third percent. New Testament, Jesus says, I own it all, and you're a steward of everything.

A tithe is a good place to start. A tithe is a good place to begin. A 10th is a good place to do it. And just being generous is great. Now, if you're sitting here being calculated, you're gonna be like, no.

So you're talking about gross or net. You've missed the whole point. I'm talking about your heart. Because where your treasure is in Matthew 621, there will your heart be also. Does God need your money?

He does not need your money. He does not need your money. He's not up there in heaven biting his nails. If this church will contribute, I can really get things done. He doesn't need your money, but he does need your heart.

And there's something different. When you contribute to the things of God, your heart goes there. It's the difference between being given tickets to the Super bowl or being given tickets to the theater or paying for them yourself. If you're giving tickets to a sporting event or you're given tickets to the theater, you know what? Maybe the day of something comes up.

Didn't have to pay for them anyway. Yeah, we didn't. Didn't work out. Sorry we couldn't go. Here's the tickets.

They just lay there. But you spend five or \$10,000 on those tickets, I promise you, months in advance, you put a save the date on the calendar. You've told the people that are going, put a save the date on the calendar. You book flights, you book meals, you book. Nothing's coming up.

Because I paid for this. Why? Because your heart's with it. When you give generously to the things of God, your heart goes with it, and then you care. Well,

where should your giving God should go?

To the house of God. It should go where you're being taught. Jesus said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Where should the lion share or the first fruits? Go to your local church, where you're serving and where you're giving.

And there's something that happens in your life where church changes. It's no longer boring. It's no longer, I don't like that church. It's no longer, I'm gonna go find a new church. It's, you're serving your best there, and you're financially supporting it there, and your heart's there.

Yeah, there'll be things that aren't good, but your attitude towards it will be different, because you're like, I'm all in, and I'm going to help make a difference. And if God had everybody in his church's tithe and everybody in his church's serve, we'd have a different church around our country. Amen. Amen. Now, I know what some of you are saying.

Always, always asking for our money. We just had somebody apparently leave our church two weeks ago that told one of our pastors, I'm leaving because Pastor Jeff doesn't ask for money enough.

So I'm asking for your money.

We first moved in here post Covid. If you came to our church before COVID we would take the offering during the service and say, now is the time for offering. Remember, those who were here, what would we do? We would clap. We go, yeah.

Why? Because God loves a cheerful giver. Don't give begrudgingly. Don't give under compulsion. I have to.

Pastor's making me tell. I'm not even looking at your giving. I'm telling you as a

saint, as a child of God, this is a blessing for you if you'll do this. Remember, I left the business world and went into ministry. I was making \$1,000 a month, and I've told you this story a lot, but I said, lord, okay, I'll tithe.

I'll give you \$100 a month. And part of the reason I was doing that is because I didn't want to continue to do ministry. I'm like, as soon as I run out of money, God, I'm out. That was about 35 years ago. I haven't run out.

And all I've seen is God's blessing in my life. I wouldn't not tithe because I want to. And then I look for things over and above tithing to give to others, because it changes your heart. When you're generous and content, God can change your heart. When you're in a church and you serve, God changes your heart.

When you don't serve, you'll be critical. When you don't give, you'll be critical. And it's okay to have a critical mind, but it's not okay to have a critical heart. And if you're not serving and you're not giving, you'll have a critical heart. You'll be like, how come they do it this way?

Why don't they do that? How come the children's ministry? Is this why they greet like that? How come they do this and they serve? Why?

Because you're not in. Give your money, lead with your money, lead with your heart, lead with your service, and God will change the way that you do it. And that's what they realize here. They're saying, God, we're going to give. You can count on us financially for the tithe.

You can count on us to give you our best. We're going to look for other opportunities to do that. And we know in the Old Testament, it started in the tabernacle, then it was in the temple. Now, where does God dwell? He dwells in us, right?

So some people say, well, I don't go to church. I'm just going to be the church. Okay, whatever listen, you are the church, but you're not the church by yourself. Every new testament command is we, we, us, we, us. So there's nothing special about this building.

What's special about this building is when a bunch of spirit filled Christians come together to serve the living God. Now, the presence and manifest presence of Jesus is here, and we magnify him, and we need that. We need to gather as the saints, so we are the church, and that's why we go to church, so we can be the church. Amen. You have to gather.

You have to. Do not forsake the gathering together as the Bible told us. That's why during COVID we kept our doors open and we always will, because God commands it and we need it. Amen. That's why we go.

And it doesn't matter to the building. There are people all over the world. Some are, you know, open air today. Some are in cinder block with dust floors. It doesn't matter where you gather.

It's that you gather and that you serve and that you give, and that's what God

blesses. Amen. And all throughout the Old Testament and New Malachi, chapter three, God says, put me to the test. Try me in this. It's like the Old Testament.

Triple dog dare I. Triple dog dare you to give to me and see if you can outgive me. Second Corinthians nine in the New Testament says, you know what you give and God will give you more. But the prosperity gospel is God will give you more, so you have more. The biblical understanding is, God will give you more so you can give more.

God will prosper you so you can be more of a blessing to other people. It's not about what you get. It's about what you're able to give and how you can serve. Amen. Jesus owns 100%.

So how do you give your best to him? By faithfully supporting and serving the house of God. Notes verse 39 will end here, for the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine, and the oil to the chambers. There are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers and the singers. Thus, we will not neglect what the house of God.

Now, you see coaches talk like this. You see it in commercials. People will say something like, this is our house. Nobody comes into our house and pushes us. This is our house.

Let me tell you something. This is God's house. God has a way of doing things his way. God wants it done a certain way. And God is inviting you to participate.

And here's what you get the privilege of doing. God's the one who's done all the work. God's the one who came and died for your sins and rose from the dead. God is the one who invited you into a relationship with him. God's the one that's given you every good and perfect gift.

God's the one that's secured your eternal life. And God also, in addition, is inviting you to be a part of that. How could you say no? So here's the truth. What step of faith is God asking you to take?

What's it look like for you in your context? To serve God the greatest and to give most generously to him. Not because he needs you. He does not need me. If I fall over dead tomorrow, God doesn't need me for brave church to exist.

God doesn't need my money for brave church to exist. What does God want? God wants my heart and my service. What's God want for you? Your heart in your service.

And that's the beauty of the gospel. God wants to do everything we read about in the Bible, read through the book of acts. You see, I want to see that, and he wants to do it. But he needs your heart. He needs you to go all in with him.

And that's what covenant renewal looks like. Amen. Would you stand with me? Our father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise. You are such a great and good God.

And Lord, we thank you today for the gospel of Jesus Christ who came and died for our sins and rose from the dead. And that through repentance and faith we have life and life in his name. And Lord, we sing to you because you are so great. You've never moved, you've never changed. And Lord, we thank you for where we are, that we don't have to make it right.

We don't have to do anything to get right. We don't have to go back and pay back tithes. We don't go back and do more. We start afresh, right where we are right now and give you all our best. And Lord, we love you and bless, bless you for who you are.

We give you all the praise. In Jesus name we pray. Amen and amen. Let's give God praise today.