



Message Transcript

Faithful Proclamation

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Pastor Jeff:

Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we're here to tell you that we love you. We thank you for being able to celebrate you today, to worship you today. For those who dedicated children today, Lord, we pray specifically for those families that they would raise those children in the knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Lord, we thank you for your Word because, Lord, we are a people that believe every time your Word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you are speaking. So our prayer today as a congregation 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 tells you and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly by saying the word amen?

Amen.

Amen. Today I want to talk to you about how we establish the work of God in a community. What is the ingredient that's needed so that when God wants to build his people, what does he do? We've been taking a look at the Book of Nehemiah, how Nehemiah followed the vision of God to come back and rebuild the wall, and he dealt with external conflict and internal conflict and all the opposition and they built it, they established it, they're doing what God wants. And now that they're a community and everybody's moved back into Jerusalem and they're doing the things that seemingly God wants them to do, what do they do from here until then? What is the necessary

ingredient?

And I want to tell you what the necessary ingredient is, in that community, in any church, in anywhere that God is trying to build what he wants. And it's this. It's faithful proclamation. It's the faithful preaching of the Word of God. Because when the Word of God is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking. And without hearing his voice, we really can't know how to respond. Without hearing his voice, we can't really know what God expects. Without hearing his voice, we don't have a relationship with God. And so God has established in community faithful proclamation of his Word so that his community can hear him, so that his community can respond to him, so that his community can live obediently to him. And so today we're going to talk about faithful proclamation. I'm going to tell you four truths about faithful proclamation. Four truths about faithful proclamation. When you're choosing a church to attend, these four truths need to be a part of the church that you attend.

When you're going to be part of a community of God, faithful proclamation needs to be certain. And to look at those four truths today, we're going to be in the Book of Nehemiah. We're going to be in Nehemiah chapter 8. So if you want to turn there to Nehemiah chapter 8, and what's going on as we recap from last week is the people of God have all started to move back into Jerusalem. The people of God are starting to nestle down behind the walls and in other cities. God is re-establishing what had been a reproach of the people. And now God is wanting the community to be built according to the standards that he set. And so what happens is faithful proclamation is central to what God wants to see happen.

Hear the Word of the Lord in Nehemiah 8:1. It says, "And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding on the first day of the seventh month."

So here's one truth about faithful proclamation. Faithful proclamation requires a man who routinely studies, practices, and teaches all of God's Word. Faithful proclamation requires a man who routinely studies, practices, and teaches all of God's Word. When they go looking for how do we do it God's way, how are we going to avoid the crisis we've experienced for the last 130 plus years, they go looking for a faithful man who routinely studies, practices, and teaches all of God's Word. Notice what the text says. It says, "They assembled all the people," and praise God, we don't have to read all the names of all the people like we did last week, "in front of the Water Gate. And everyone who was able to listen, all men, all women, and all who could understand, gathered there."

And who do they ask? Who do they call? They ask Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law. What's the Book of the Law? It's the Word of God. It's the Word of God. If the community is going to be what God wants the community to be, the Word of God needs to be central. Now, if you flip back one book prior to the Book of Nehemiah, you'll see the Book of Ezra and Ezra really complements Nehemiah because Ezra was a scribe. Ezra moved back to Jerusalem 14 years before Nehemiah. So for 14 years he's been building the spiritual climate of the people as a

scribe so that when God sends Nehemiah back, spiritually the people are ready to believe that what God is sending to them and what God wants to be done can be done because he's been faithfully proclaiming the Word to God's people for 14 years.

Now, they've had a drought prior to that, but in Ezra 7:10, we read about what Ezra was like, what Ezra set his heart to, what was important to Ezra. And I believe any faithful preacher of the Word of God should understand this and apply it. It says this in Ezra 7:10, "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord," that's to study God's Word, "and to practice it and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel." That's to teach the whole counsel of God. That's not to just take certain parts. That's to teach it all. So he's going to study it, practice, and teach it. Every faithful proclaimer of the Word of God is called to do those three things. Study the Word of God, practice the Word of God, and proclaim all of the Word of God, not just little pieces of it.

And when we think about studying the Word of God, let's just take a look at these three things, studying the Word of God, it's painstakingly taking the time to read, to study, to learn, to grow, to pray, to change. When you study the Word of God, the Word of God is living and active. The Word of God will study you. It's not just sitting down with a cup of coffee and reading the Bible and say, "Okay, I read it." It's studying the Word in such a way that allows God to speak. It's meditating on the Word, it's memorizing the Word, it's reciting the Word. It's letting the Word speak.

It's letting the Word cover over as authority over everything in the culture. So the

Word of God has authority over everything that we think we know, that the Word of God is more important than pragmatism, that the Word of God is more important than what other people think, that the Word of God is more important than what the culture would dictate, that the Word of God is authoritative over every bit of life, that the Word of God is sufficient for everything that you need in this life. That's what it means to study the Word of God.

And I can tell you, I studied the Word of God before I became a pastor. I promise you that I did. But there's something about preaching in an expository way, going through book by book, word by word, precept upon precept, over a period of time that changes you. I've been at this church now for 14 years and prior to being at this church I preached, I've been preaching for thirty-some years, but as an evangelist or as a guest preacher or going into a prison, I could pick and choose from about 30 sermons and stories and pull and put it together and turn out something that was true in the Word of God.

But there's something about preaching to God's people, the same people that sit here and say, "Feed me," and giving them the Word of God from passages that I would never ever pick otherwise unless I'm going through a book. And when you do that, it changes you. I remember teaching through the Gospel of Matthew. Some of you were here. We took three years to go through the Gospel of Matthew. I preached 90 sermons on the Gospel of Matthew. And when I went through the Gospel of Matthew, my understanding of the Gospel changed. It went from just you've got to believe in Jesus, you just need to trust him, to there is no salvation without repentance.

If you're not repenting, you can't be saved. You can't just name the name of Jesus and live your way. Repentance is essential to salvation.

It also taught me that every single believer that's truly repentant bears fruit. If you're not bearing fruit, it's a sign that you're not saved. And how do you know that? Because for 90 sermons, that's all I heard in the Gospel of Matthew. I said, "How can you see it any other way?" That's Jesus' understanding of the Gospel. It changed me. And I've allowed the Word to change me and I've allowed it to change my preaching. When I talk through the Book of 1 Corinthians, my understanding of spiritual gifts changed and church discipline changed and the permanence of marriage changed and divorce changed and remarriage changed. And my understanding of what love really is changed, and my understanding of prophecy changed. Why? Because I was letting the Word of God read me as I was getting ready to prepare what God had to say to his people.

My understanding of creation changed after teaching through Genesis 1 through 11. Prior to being a pastor, I would probably be in the camp where people would say to me, "What difference does it make? I mean, God created it, right? If it took millions of years or it took 6,000 years, who really cares, as long as you believe in the gospel that Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead, and you got to believe that." And I would've been like, "Yeah, you're probably right, no big deal," until I started studying Genesis. And then for me, it became an issue of authority because if God said, "This is what I did, and oh, by the way, none of you were there because I'm the only eyewitness of creation, this is how I did it and this is when I did it and this is the

way I did it," then it wasn't a question of what I thought. It was a question of what God said.

And if God didn't create the world in six literal days and rest on the seventh, then Genesis 1's not true. And if Genesis 1 isn't true, why would the rest of the Bible be true? And if we don't have Genesis 1 that God created the perfect world, then why do we need Genesis 3? Because Genesis 3 tells us how man has rebelled and sinned and all the curses that came out of that. So I got to a place where not only do I see it, I believe it and I'm going to teach it. And the reason I always say that the world's about 6,000 years old and that God created the world in six literal days and people that don't believe God's Word look at me and say, "You're an idiot. Scientists say this," and all this kind of stuff, is because I don't give a rip what a scientist says. I do care about what God says.

Amen.

And I have decided that when I get to heaven, I want to stand in the line that says, "God, I just believe what you said." I do not want to stand in the line with hundreds and thousands of people that are like, "Well, I was a pastor, but Dr. so-and-so said and Dr. scientist said." And God says, "Well, they're not here. Why didn't you just believe what I said?" I don't want to stand in that line. Do you understand what I'm saying? So it changed me, and then I could teach authoritatively. If you're a young child and you have a good reading comprehension, you're in fourth or fifth grade and you read Genesis 1, you can believe what it says, which means you can also believe

Genesis 2 and everything else in the Bible because it's true, just like it says.

And then when I taught the Book of Revelation, it changed my understanding of end times, and we had fun with it. I mean, I joked about the things that I don't quite understand and I told you authoritatively about the things that you must believe in, all those different things. And it changed me because I saw it align and correlate with all of the other scriptures, all the things the Old Testament prophets were saying, all the things the New Testament Apostles were saying, all the ways that they were living for the Lord the way God wanted them to live. And so when you study the Word, it's not a matter of going into a closet and reading other people's commentaries about what they say about the Word. It's getting before the Lord and praying and asking God what he says about what he said, and then it's believing it and then it's practicing it.

I mean, we like to say this, "You need to practice what you preach." We say that about pastors. God says it about all of us. The Word of God has changed my understanding of what it means to be a husband. The Word of God has changed my understanding of what it means to be a dad. The Word of God has changed my understanding of what it means to be a pastor. And just a couple other things that God has changed in my heart, my understanding of money, forgiveness, leadership, service, evangelism, tithing, vision, heaven, hell, Jesus, the cross, the resurrection, the blood, just to name a few. Because I don't read the Bible like, "Oh, yeah, I know this. I'm going to teach them this." I read the Bible in such a way that I'm saying, "What are you trying to say? What am I missing? What are we missing as a culture? God, what do I need to change in order to align my life under you?"

And I may not do it perfectly, but I'm trying to do it increasingly, and I've told you every single time, if there's something I say that you don't believe, then trust this Book because this Book is eternal and the grass withers and the flowers fade, but the Word of our Lord stands forever. There's nothing changing about this Book. And if you say, "Well, I like this part, but I don't like that part," then you say, "Well, I like Jesus in this way, but I don't like him in that way," because this Book reveals the fullness of who God is. And then teach it. Teach what? Teach all of God's Word. Be difficult to do on one Sunday, of course, but teach all of God's Word.

When the Apostle Paul met with the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20, before he was leaving them, he said this in Acts 20:27, "For I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." What's the whole purpose of God? It's every single part is true. Whether you like it or not, whether it's comfortable or not, whether you agree with it or not, it's true. So teach all of God's Word. Do it in a way that makes it understandable and applicable, whether in a large audience or a small. Don't shy away from difficult topics or books. There's nothing wrong with teaching topically from time to time. There's nothing wrong with teaching on marriage or money or family or ministry. There's nothing wrong with that. But give people a steady diet of the Word because there's something about going through line by line, precept on precept, where you're going to be forced to say things that God wants said.

And I can tell you his ways are higher than my ways, his thoughts are higher than my thoughts, and the things coming out of my mouth sometimes are not things, most of

the time, they didn't originate with me, but God's saying it. And that's why sometimes when you come into a church like BRAVE or if you grew up in a church that expounded the Word, you should be thankful because you get to hear the Word of God. Because unfortunately in our culture, it's becoming less and less and less of a priority when it needs to be elevated and be more and more and more of one.

And don't ever apologize for what the Word teaches. I can tell you right now God does not need a PR agent. When I listen to pastors give sermons, say, "Today we're going to talk about and it's going to be really hard," I'm like, "Stop already." God didn't line it up that way. There's nothing in this Book where God says, "Today we're going to talk about marriage. It's going to be really, really tough. Today we're going to talk about divorce. It's going to be really, really tough. Today we're going to talk about God." He doesn't say that. He just says, "Here's what it is, deal with it." That's who our God is. So I appreciate sometimes when people tell me, "Pastor Jeff, you're so bold, you're so courageous." I'm really not. It's just the Spirit of God inside of me because I'm way more terrified of him than I am of you. Amen.

Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge." Oh, that God would raise up more and more men that would study and practice and teach the Word of God, that would herald it so that all of God's people could actually hear it. Now, here this point, faithful proclamation requires a man who routinely studies, practices and teaches all of God's Word. Why a man? Why a man? Because gender matters to God, because God created gender. Because in Genesis chapter 1, he

created two genders, male and female he created them, and both are equal in God's sight, but both have distinction in how they are to function according to God. And if you believe in gender the way God defines it, then you have to say, "Well, then, who should be teaching?" And God doesn't keep that a secret. Do you know there's not one instance in the Old Testament or the New Testament where a woman opens up the Word of God in the house of God and exposit it? Not one. There's not one example.

I mean, you think about this. In the Old Testament, God never had any female priests, and in the New Testament, Jesus, the most revolutionary religious leader of all time, did not have one female apostle. All he needed to do was say, "Oh, Joanna, honey, come here," Or, "Mary Magdalene, come here. I need you to get in the synagogue and read Isaiah 61 for me and tell people what it means." If he would've done that just once, he would've said, "It's cool." But he never did it once because God has reserved the proclamation of the Word in the house of God to men. It's been that way from the beginning. Not only is it clear that it never happens in the scriptures, but it's also clear that God prohibits it in scriptures.

I mean, listen to this text. I'm just going to read these to you so you can hear the Word of God because I know we have a congregation that wants to hear it. You said, "Pastor Jeff, why are you talking about this on Mother's Day?" Because I'm in Nehemiah 8, and it happens to be what we're talking about. And because what I find is there's a lot of churches in our culture that on Mother's Day bring their wives up to preach because they say, "If the wife preaches, then the women will know that we value women."

Can I just tell you something? Women, I value every one of you because God values you just for being a woman. And we don't need to malign the Word of God for you to feel valued. We don't. Now, because of the way our culture is, I get it. Some of you that are on the inside that are far from rows are like, "How the heck do I get out of here without excusing myself?" I get it. Just hang with me. But just let the Word of God speak. In 1 Corinthians 14, it says, "When it comes to order in the church, the women are to keep silent in the churches."

Well, "Pastor Jeff, what's that mean?" Let me just read it to you again. It says, "The women are to keep silent in the churches for they are not permitted to speak but are to subject themselves just as the law says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home. For it is improper for a woman to speak in church." You know what improper means? Despicable, disgusting. It's the same word that's used when it talks about silly talk or coarse joking or sexual innuendo. It's disgusting. That's what God thinks about a woman in the pulpit in the house of God. Now, those aren't my words. Those are God's words. So if you have a problem, go talk to God about it. He's making it clear. And Paul goes on to say, "This is not me. This is what the Lord says. And this is what we instruct in all the churches."

"But then, Pastor Jeff, then why do we have so many women preachers?" That's a great question. They're not getting it from the Word of God. They're not. Do you know when sin entered the world and sin entered the world through one man, Adam, and God cursed the ground and said, "Hey, for you men, when you go out and work, it's going to be hard. You're going to get the same stuff done, but you're going to

sweat by the toil of your brow." Work's hard. There's no perfect job. All work is hard. Just when you think it's okay, it's hard because there's other people and there's other situations. Work's hard. For the woman he said, "You know what? You get a double curse. I'm going to increase your pain in childbirth. That's going to be a universal curse for every woman." And any woman here and any woman around the world that's ever had a child knows that's true.

Amen.

Amen. I can't tell you of my own personal experience, but on what I've watched and seen and heard, I know it's true. As having a mom who's a labor and delivery nurse, she would agree. And can you imagine what it was like even 200 years ago when we didn't have the modern medicine we have and no epidurals, no spinals, no episiotomies, no sutures, no nothing. A lot of women died in childbirth. Women still die in childbirth. And even women that have healthy babies still would say, "My body's not the same as it was before I had children." Why? It's part of the curse. There's a second part of that curse. You know what God said? "As a result of the curse, your desire's going to be for your husband and he's going to rule over you." What's the curse? Hey, women, here's another universal curse. You're going to desire to lead over your husband and push him down. And the only way the gospel's going to advance is for men to take a role of leadership and say, "No, no, no, I got this." That's part of the curse.

Why is it women want to preach? It's part of the curse. I want to be able to do

what a man can do. It's part of our culture. It's totally part of our culture. I can only be valued if I do what a man does. I can only be valued if I work in the marketplace. I can only be valued if I'm doing what he does. I can only be valued if I get paid as much. And in the church, I can only be valued if I'm teaching the Word like the men teach. Where do you think that thought originates? It doesn't originate with God. It originates in the pit of hell. So you just need to know that. Happy Mother's Day. Or how about 1 Timothy 2? I mean, can this be any more clear? I mean, if you're looking for men to lead, God makes it clear in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 that in order to be an elder in the church, one who's going to speak, you have to be a man because you have to be the husband of one wife.

Well, how do you know whether the husband has to be male? Because God created gender. And if the Word of God is true, then men are husbands and women can't be husbands. So it's prohibited there too. But in case you didn't believe that, 1 Timothy 2:11, "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over man, but she is to be quiet." Why? He goes all the way back to the order of creation, and he talks about the fact that women will be saved through the curse, saved through childbirth. They're going to be fine. But men are called to teach in the house of God.

"So Pastor Jeff, can't women teach? Can't they teach?" Yes. God even gives a whole curriculum in Titus 2 about what they're called to teach. This is what women's ministry looks like. This is the blueprint. "Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior," it means you honor the Lord in all you do, "not malicious gossips nor

enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good so that," what? "so they may encourage the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure," notice this word, we put it in three words, but in the Greek it's one, "workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands." Why? "So the Word of God will not be dishonored." That's what a woman is called to be according to the Word of God.

Now, I know when I teach this, people get really uncomfortable. You're not really uncomfortable with me. You're uncomfortable with what God is saying. And here's why you're uncomfortable. You're uncomfortable because of our culture. You're uncomfortable because of how you've been lied to. And so when I start teaching this, then I can hear you saying, "What about Deborah?" Look at Deborah. Have you ever read? Yeah, I've read. Judges 4, a faithless generation under the judgment of God because men weren't leading. He chose faithful Deborah over unfaithful every man to rise up and do something for him. But even Deborah did not go into battle without Barak. Why? Because she knew that was the man's job. But nowhere, nowhere, nowhere in the Book of Judges does she get into the synagogue, open up a scroll, and exposit the scriptures, but she serves God faithfully.

"Well, Pastor Jeff, Pastor Jeff, what about, did you not know that when Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to women first?" I'm like, "Yeah." What did he tell them to do? He said, "Go to the men and tell them I rose from the dead." "So you mean Jesus told women to go speak the gospel and tell other people about the..." Yeah. Yeah, you should. He didn't tell them, "Go into the synagogue and exposit the scriptures and teach all the men from the Word what happened." "Just go give

testimony that I'm alive." "Well, Pastor Jeff, what about Philip's daughters? They were all prophetesses." Yes, they were, but they were not used in the synagogue in that way. So what you see is you see women sing. They give testimony and expression. They encourage. They teach younger women to love their husbands, to love their families, to be busy at home. And God honors that. But from the garden until now, it's always been a man's job to bring the Word.

And if you're here and you say, "But I know more about the Word than my husband and he doesn't know anything. Man, here's my thing." Step it up. Be a man, and being a man means that you know the Word of God and that you're going to study it and practice it and teach it. That's what it means to be a man of God. Amen. And so that's what he's talking about. Now you say, "Well, why is this a big deal? It's not a big deal. We got all these problems in our culture, and you want to talk about this." I'm only talking about this because I want you to understand faithful proclamation.

Now, here's what some people say, just so you know, they skirt it. They say, "Well, I preach today, but I'm preaching under the authority of our elders." You heard that one before? Do you know what that means? That means elders have changed the Word of God. "God said you can't, but guess what? We have more authority on the Word than God does. So we're going to say that she can preach under our authority." Would you do that any other way? "Bible says, 'Don't gossip.' But under my authority, I'm telling you my wife can gossip." No, no. Now, just so you know, I'm not on a witch hunt here. "Pastor Jeff, there's churches all over our city today. Are you mad at?" I'm not mad. I'm frustrated that nobody's teaching the Word of God properly so that

people know how to respond.

[inaudible 00:24:49] the truth.

Amen. Not mad. Many of those churches love Jesus, are trying to do their best to teach the Word and leading people to Christ. And I'm for that, but I'm also for the whole counsel of God and not just little parts of it. And here's what I would say. Because we live in a culture that only champions when women can be like men, there's a problem with that. You see, if you champion women preachers, here's what you also have to celebrate. You also have to celebrate men participating in women's sports. And you also have to celebrate drag queen readings for your young children. And you also have to celebrate men wanting to have babies and every other abominable gender derivative. Why? Because if God tells you this is what gender is but you're not willing to uphold what gender is, then you can't have it both ways.

Let me give you an example. Let's say a practicing homosexual came into our church and said, "Pastor Jeff, I want you to marry me and my other practicing homosexual friend here." Do you know what I would say? "Can't do it, bro." Do you know why? Because it's sinful. And I could start in Genesis 1 and work all the way through the scriptures to show them how God did not make you that way. He did not create you that way. You've chosen something outside of God's will, and God is not for that and for God, he says marriage is between a man and a woman till death do you part. You're not doing it God's way. So I can't participate in what you're doing. Not only won't I do the wedding, I'm not going to your wedding because it's not a wedding.

That's what I would say.

But if that guy, now, listen, listen, listen. But what if that guy said, "Well, wait, wait, wait. You're telling me you won't marry me because of the authority of God's Word?" I'm like, "Yeah, that's why I won't marry you." "Then Pastor Jeff, why do you have women preachers?" If I said, "Well, because those things I just read to you, those are cultural," then it's game, set, match. But what I would tell him is that's why we don't have women preachers because we believe the Word of God and that women aren't called to preach in the church to a coed audience because God forbids it and thinks it's disgusting. So we're going to hold the line on gender because God cares about gender. And God wants you if you're a male, to be the fullness of who you are as a male. And if you're a woman, he wants you to be the fullness of who you are as a woman, and he wants to celebrate you for being exactly who he made you to be. Amen.

And you can watch this and you'll see it more and more because churches that have female pastors when there's no such thing as a female pastor, here's what you have. When you have a female pastor of a church, you neither have a pastor or a church biblically. And when you see that happen, what you see is it's a slippery slide to transgenderism, wokeism, and everything else. Because what people say is, "Well, we're just kind of doing this once a year. Okay, we're doing it a little more frequently. Okay, well, now we do this and now we do that." And pretty soon, "Okay, we're open to every..." You watch. It's going on right before your eyes.

So as your pastor, because I love God and because I love you so much, women,

I just want you to hear the Word of God and let you respond any way he wants you to. You don't need to preach to be valued. You don't. You get to be the fullness of what God created you to be. And we have wonderful women at BRAVE serving in all sorts of different ministries. They just don't serve as elders and preachers. Why? Because God said, "Don't let them serve as elders or preachers." "Okay, God, we're cool with what you want." And I'm telling you the mess we see in our culture, there's a lot of things going on. There's a lot of ways people are trying to fix it. But if the church could just get gender right, maybe it would bleed into the culture, but because the church doesn't even get it right, we have no hope in the culture.

So as long as I'm your pastor, I for one, I'm just going to hold tight to gender. I got a wife and two daughters. I love them unbelievably. They can be whatever they want in life. I will champion them. They're not going to serve as elders or preachers. They're not. And men, what's your problem following around all these women saying, "I want to hear what they have to say." Like, what's going on in our culture? This is what's going on. You are valued because you are an image-bearer of God. Okay, that's my first point. [inaudible 00:28:48].

Faithful proclamation requires a man who routinely studies, practices, and teaches all of God's Word, all of God's Word. And I'm here to tell you, if you have a place, whether it's home, or outside the church, grew up in it, wherever, you're here, praise God if you have somebody that will study and practice and teach it. Now, there's only one perfect man that ever lived. There's only one perfect man. It's Jesus Christ. You'll never find a perfect pastor. I mean, as much as I hope that I'm accurate

with everything that I'm teaching, I promise you when I get to heaven, God's going to, "You're kind of off on that one."

I'm not off on what I'm teaching today because there's too many scriptures that say that. I'm willing to stand in that line and hold the line. The only reason we have a problem with it in our culture is because our culture, the feminist movement has killed our culture. And we get all mad because we got male swimmers competing and dominating and males in the 400 that can beat up all the women, we're like, "That's so wrong." So is a woman preacher. You can't have it both ways. I think it's wrong. I think it's wrong to have women in men's sports. Totally think it's wrong because I think God created gender. I think it's wrong for men to go into women's bathrooms because God created gender. I mean, I believe all those things because of what the Word of God teaches. So hold all of the Word of God and not just a little part of it. All right. So that's what we're looking for, a man who faithfully and accurately studies, practices, and teaches the Word.

Number two is this. Faithful proclamation provides a clear explanation that leads to a God-honoring response. Faithful proclamation provides a clear explanation that leads to a God-honoring response. If we're going to read the Word, we need to explain the Word. Notice what happens in verse 3. Talking about Ezra, "He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday in the presence of men and women, those who could understand, and all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law."

Can I just pause there for a second? He preached for at least six hours, six hours. "Pastor Jeff, you've gone 32 minutes and I'm bored already. How in the world could we go six hours?" Think about what you do. How long do you watch TV? When you go to a sporting event, how long do you get there before the event? How long do you stay after? How long is that? I mean, what is it that can keep your attention for a long period of time? If you go mountain biking, how long do you go? "Well, I only go 15 minutes to mountain bike because it gets really boring after that." Please. How long do you go fishing? How long do you go on vacation? Whatever captivates you can keep your attention. If you can't pay attention to the Word of God, that has more to say about you than it has to say about God. Do you know what I'm saying? They're listening to this Word for six hours. We only get an hour and a half at BRAVE. Makes me want to lengthen our services.

And notice what happens. They're reading from the Book and it says in verse 4, "Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden podium," that word really is platform, they build a wooden platform which they had made for the purpose, "and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah on his right hand." So six men stood to his right, and then notice this, "And Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left." So seven guys stood on his left. So there's six on the right, seven on the left, he's in the middle. There's 14 men on the platform. "Ezra opened the Book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people and when he opened it, all the people stood up." Why? Because he's reading the Word of God and they want to give the Word of God honor.

Now, notice what happened. "Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, by reading the Word." And notice how people answered when he was reading the Word. And all the people answer and saying, "Amen. Amen." Do you know what amen, amen means? You know what amen means? Yes, that's true. I believe it. I agree. Amen. That's what it means. And as he's reading the Word, everybody's yelling out, "Amen, amen, I believe all that." While lifting their hands, they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Notice how they worshiped. They lifted their hands. They lifted their hands.

Now I know it's like when you walk into a church, if you've never been in a church that lifts their hands, it seems a little weird. I remember the first time I went to a church or the Promise Keepers event, and guys were lifting their hands. I'm like, "That's a little weird." But what is lifting your hands? It's surrender, right? I mean, an officer of the law pulls out a gun and says, "Stick your hands up," you wouldn't say, "Well, I'm not really the hand lifting type." No, you would lift them to show I surrender. They're showing we worship you and we surrender to what we're hearing. And then what were they doing? They were bowing. They got down on their knees. What were they showing? They were showing humility and submission to the Word. Lord, we're so dependent upon what you're giving us that we don't live on bread alone, but from every Word that comes out of your mouth, and Lord, we're dependent upon you, we're humble and submissive.

And then their face was low, and why was their face low? Because they were repenting and they were in desperation because we know from the Word of God in

Romans 2:4, "The kindness of the Lord leads us to repentance." We see all these acts of worship when the Word of God is faithfully and accurately proclaimed. Notice verse 7, "Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah, the Levites." What did they do? They explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. They read from the Book, from the Law, translating to give a sense so that they could understand the meaning.

Why? Because these people, you got to understand, the Hebrew scriptures are written predominantly in Hebrew. The Old Testament's predominantly written Hebrew. There is some Aramaic where they're written, but most of it's Hebrew. Now, what's happened for the last 130, 150 years, these people have been in exile speaking Aramaic. So for generations, they're speaking a different language, so they may know a little Hebrew, but when the Word of God's being spoken in a way they don't totally understand, they don't know how to do it. So what's the job of Ezra and all of the people helping them? Explaining what it means. That's what a faithful preacher of the Word does.

Why? Because the Word of God is written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and it's written 2000 years ago, 4000 years ago. We're taking texts from a culture that was way back then in a language we don't even speak, to understand what it means and then to apply it into today so that you can leave here and say, "When I read Nehemiah 8, I didn't understand that. I didn't see any of that. Now I understand it." That's what a

faithful teacher of the Word of God does. Because if you don't understand the Word, what difference does it make?

Have you ever been in one of those places where you have somebody tell you, "Well, we go to this church." "And what's the pastor like?" "Oh, he's so smart." "What'd he preach on today?" "It was so good, nobody even understood what he was talking about. It was so lofty." I'm like, "That's not good preaching." If you talk in a way that nobody can understand, you're not a faithful communicator of God's Word. You should be able to understand, "Here's what it says. Here's what it means. Here's what I need to apply and I'm going to go do something with it." That's faithful preaching of the Word.

And so a faithful preacher provides this clear explanation that leads to a God-honoring response. That's why when sometimes you're here, it's a reminder of, "Man, I'm doing well with the Lord." Other times you're here, you feel something cut across your heart, like, "I need to change that and this has to change in me." Or, "Man, I really need to forgive. I thought I had forgiven them. I don't think I've forgiven them and I need to..." Whatever's going on in your life, the Word of God has a way of doing it. And that's why I love preaching because inevitably somebody will come up to me, like, "Hey, Pastor Jeff, remember when you taught last week and you're talking about forgiveness?" "Pastor Jeff, remember when you taught last week and you talked about money?" "Remember what you taught last week and you taught about?" And I'm like, "I didn't teach about any of those things, but the Holy Spirit used his Word to teach you about it." You understand?

I mean, even when you're studying the Word on your own, isn't it interesting, when God wants to get your attention, it doesn't matter whether you're in Old or New Testament or where you're at, God has a way of telling you, "Here's what I want you to see." "Well, I don't want to read that." You go somewhere else. You're like, "Here's what I want you to see." Because the Word of God reads you, right? And this is what he was doing. He was providing a clear explanation that leads to a God-honoring response.

May we have more people that preach his Word in this way. I mean, we have more Bibles sold than any other book in history, but we're right now still one of the most biblically illiterate generations in the world because we go to places and we hear the same topical preaching over and over for year after year after year and we have five topics that we've heard. We've heard marriage, we've heard money, we've heard forgiveness. We've heard this, we've heard that. And then we go on our way and we just recycle them. And we never learn anything about what God is actually saying.

And I just want you to know, not everybody gets to hear the Word of God the way you get to hear the Word of God. Not everybody has a pastor that is terrified of God and wants to do what God wants and say what God wants said. And that's why we've gone on the radio. Here in Denver, I think we're on about six times a day, and I can tell you hundreds of stories of people who have either come to Christ or have grown in their faith because they drive a truck, they can't be here on Sundays, but they listen to us all week. And they tell us stories. I remember a Mormon gal told us one time she couldn't come here, but she had come to Christ and her family actually left her

because she had come to Christ and all these different thing. I mean, we've heard story after story after story. Why? Because the faithful proclamation of the Word of God changes people's lives.

And then by God's grace, I think we got on 33 other stations across the country that just kind of happened. But we made a decision recently to expand our footprint so more people can hear what we're doing. And I want to show you a slide of as of this week where we're being broadcast across the country. We're now in 44 states across the country broadcasting what you get to hear here in hopes that more people hear the Word of God and can respond. So I would encourage you, pray for that. Pray that somebody driving through New Jersey or Virginia or North Carolina or South Carolina or Idaho or somewhere hears the Word of God in a way they've never heard it, because we've heard this story, if we've heard it once, we've heard it a bunch of times.

People write in, like, "I don't even listen to Christian radio. I don't even know how you got on the air. I was flipping through the channels, but I started listening and something caught me and I pulled into the grocery store and I couldn't let go of what God was saying to me through the radio. I didn't even know who you were. And God saved my life." I mean, that's the Word of God. It's him. It's his authority. And when it gets proclaimed, has the possibility of changing people's lives.

Number three is this, not only does it provide a clear explanation that leads to God-honoring results, it invites people to remember that the joy of the Lord is your strength. That the joy of the Lord is your strength. It recalibrates and re-centers your

life on Jesus. Notice verse 9. "Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not weep, do not mourn.' For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law." Because they hadn't heard a steady diet of the Word. When they heard the diet of the Word, they just wept.

You ever had a season in your life like that? I remember, I went through a hard season after I graduated from seminary and I remember going to my church and I was desperate and I was hurting. And every time the Word of God got open, for about six to eight weeks, I just remember I'd just weep. I don't remember what was being said. I'd just weep. And I just knew God was with me and I knew he was good because it was the Word of God. The people were weeping because they realized we haven't lived the way the Lord wants us to live. We haven't done what the Lord wants us to do. And the beauty of repentance is in that moment of weeping, you feel the love of God. I still love you. I haven't changed my character and I haven't changed my nature and my mercies are new every single morning.

So notice what the people say in verse 10. "Then he said to them, 'Go eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared. For this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'" You want to know how to be strong in this world? It ain't going to happen through your job. Your joy will never be in your job. It will never be your marriage. It'll never be your kids. It will never be your parents. It won't be picking the right school. It won't be picking the right vocation. It won't be having the right vacation. All of those things can bring a

measure of joy. And to the extent that they're blessings of God, great. But if you put your whole heart on saying, "This has got to be my joy," it will never be enough.

And so what's faithful preaching do? It brings people right back to say, "I just want to remind you today, I want to remind you, no matter what you're going through, Jesus is where you're going to find the answer. Jesus is where you're going to find your joy." That's why Paul says in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I'll say, rejoice." It's why James says in James 1:2, "Consider it all joy when you face trials of many kinds." When we're facing trials, we come to church, it's like, "Pastor, tell me how to get out of this." And I'm like, "Well, God designed it. He may not be getting you out of it. You may be in this trial for a long, long time, but I got news for you. If you'll go to Jesus, you can have joy in the middle of your trial if you put him first."

So faithful preaching recalibrates and re-centers your attention off the things of the world and right back onto Jesus Christ. And isn't that good to know? You can't change your circumstances, you can't change somebody else, but you can change your heart and your focus to give God all the glory and experience his joy no matter what's going on. And faithful preachers will teach you that. The Bible says, "Delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." See, we live in a culture that has a pagan religion that says it's our job to design our future and what we want and what we need and what would be great and what would be the perfect life, and then beg God to give it to us. And to the extent he does, we like him. And to the extent he doesn't, we don't. That's paganism.

Christianity is, "Lord, you saved me. I'm yours. You created me. Whatever you

want from me, I want to give it all to you. You're the center of my life. You're my joy. What do you want me to do? How do you want me to do it? In what way do you want me to do it? I'll do that. And whether I have a lot or a little, I just want my joy in you." That's Christianity. Amen. And then whether the Lord uses you as King Solomon as one of the richest men of all time, or uses you as Stephen to be martyred after one sermon, what difference does it make as long as God gets all the glory and you get all his joy. That's what it looks like.

And faithful preaching recalibrates and re-centers. It's not about you. It's not about what you accomplish. It's not about what you get. It's not about your life and what you get out of this. It's about God right now in you and how you can enjoy him. And notice what they say. So to the Levites, verse 11, they calmed all the people saying, "Be still for the day is holy. Do not be grieved. And all the people went away to eat and to drink and send portions and to celebrate a great festival because they understood the words which had been made known to them." They understood God's Word.

Now, think about this word holy. When we hear the word holy in church, here's what we think. Legalistic, boring, awful. That's not what holy means. Holy means I get to do things the way God wants them done and there's great joy in it. So they say, "It's a holy day. So let's have a feast. Don't cry. It's a holy day." When you get married, it's a holy day. When you start your union together as a husband and wife, it's a holy day. If you have kids, it's a holy day. When you come to church, it's a holy day. "This is the

day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Holiness is not a drag.

Holiness is not, "Oh, I can't do what I want to do." You were created to be set apart and to do all the things God wants you to do. And those of you who are walking with him know that I'm telling you the truth.

When you walk in the holiness of God, there's no greater satisfaction, there's no greater joy, and there's no greater experience you can have than knowing I'm doing things the way God wants me to do them. Holiness is good. So they're saying, "Guys, I know you're hearing the word of Lord and I know you're weeping. There's a time for that. There's a time for weeping. There's a time for mourning. It's not today. Today's the time to celebrate because God's just brought us all back together. He's building a community. So let's just do it his way. Let's have a big party." Parties can be holy.

Remember when the lost son came home, the prodigal son? What did they have? Music and dancing, big feast. What do we have in the coming kingdom? The wedding feast of the Lamb. It's going to be a holy day because it's going to be a par-tay. Amen. "I don't want to go to heaven. We're just going to sit around and sing hymn." No, you're not. You're going to worship the Lord and it's going to be the most radical, beautiful thing you've ever experienced. It's not going to be dull and boring at all.

And then finally, let me close by telling you this. Faithful proclamation, faithful preaching creates a hunger to obey all the statutes and ordinances of God. Faithful preaching will create a hunger to obey all the statutes and ordinances of God. If you hear preachings like, "Well, I have to. Pastor said I can't drink, I can't smoke, I can't chew. I can't date girls who do. It's so hard," that's legalism. But when you hear the

Word of the Lord that says it's not about what you must do for God, it's what God did for you and because he did everything for you, wouldn't you want to give him your best too? Yeah. How do I do it?

So notice what happened here. The Feast of the Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths was restored. Notice verse 13. "Then on the second day, the heads of fathers, households of all the people, the priests and the Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe that they might gain insight into the words of the Law." Now, I love this verse. I love it. You know why I love it? Because the leadership in the city understood that if we get in front of the Word of God and we listen to the Word of God, God can change us too. We're not experts on it.

My favorite seminary professors were guys that had faithfully taught the Word of God for 50 years and would have tears when they would do their devotions in our class saying, "This is what God showed me in Ephesians this morning. I've never seen that before." And I remember thinking as a young guy, "You've studied this book for 50 years, you've written a commentary on this book, and God's still showing you things that you didn't even know." That was humbling to me. And I find this, the longer I study the Word of God, the more depth there is to plumb in understanding just how great our God is. Amen.

"They found written in the Law how the Lord had commanded through Moses that the sons of Israel should live in booths during the feasts of the seventh month. So they proclaimed and circulated a proclamation in all their cities and in Jerusalem, 'Go to the

hills and bring olive branches and wild olive branches, myrtle branches, palm branches and branches of other leafy trees to make booths' as it is written. So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof and in the courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square and at the Water Gate and at the square of the Gate of Ephraim. The entire assembly of those who had returned from captivity made booths and lived in them. The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day. And there was great rejoicing."

Now you'll read about the Feast of the Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths. It was to be done once a year in the seventh month on the 15th through the 22nd day. They would make little tabernacles or tents. They would have a camping trip for a week. And when they lived in these tabernacles, they were reminded of the fact that when they were in the wilderness and they had nothing, God provided everything. And as they were reading the Word that day, the leadership's like, "God instructed us to do this every year. We're not doing it. Why aren't we doing this? We should be doing what God said. We didn't know God wanted us to do this. Nobody told us, our parents didn't pass this down. We're sending out a proclamation so we can do what God wants. We're going to have a Feast of Booths."

And notice this. I mean, for me, living in a little tent for a week does not sound exciting to me at all. And certainly there are people in Israel that probably felt the way I did, but you don't hear that. You know what they hear? "We just want to be obedient to God. If God told us to do this, we'll do this. We'll set it up anywhere, anyplace, anytime

to do it like God did it." And they were super excited to make these booths and to show God, "We heard you and we did what you wanted us to do." The Feast of the Tabernacles was reinstated. They hadn't done it since the time of Joshua when he took people into the Promised Land. And now this generation is doing it God's way.

And notice this. "On the very last day," verse 18, "he read from the Book of the Law of God," that's the Word of God, "daily, from the first day to the last day. And they celebrated the feast seven days, the 15th through 22nd. And on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly according to the ordinance," which we'll talk about next week. So as the Word of God was read, it created a hunger. And people were saying, "I delight to obey God. I want to obey God. How do I obey God? Help me obey God. I want to do it for your glory. It's not a chore. It's this burning desire in me. I want to do it your way." And if you hear the Word of God faithfully proclaimed and you have the right heart, that'd be questions you should be asking all the time.

Husbands, how can I become a better man of God as a husband? How do I become a better man of God as a dad? Wives, how do I become a better woman of God as a wife? How do I become a better woman of God as a mother? How do I become a better daughter? How do I become a better son? How do I represent God better in school? How do I represent God better in the workplace? How do I represent God better in my neighborhood? How can I be more faithful with evangelism? How can I be more faithful in the Word? How can I be more faithful in my resources? And Lord, I just want to do it your way and I want you to show me how to do it because you've done everything for me and there's no way I could ever repay you. I just want to be so

obedient.

And here's the beauty of it. When we live like this, we live with the joy of the Lord, knowing not only do we get to experience the fullness of God now, but it's preparing us for the day that we get to meet him face to face, when he brings us into the kingdom and presents us faultless before his Father with exceedingly great joy saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And that's what faithful proclamation does. It builds the community so that we stay on mission for God until we meet God face to face. Do you know why I love this church? Do you know why this is my favorite place to preach and I'd rather be here than any other congregation in the entire country? Because you love the Word of God. You want to hear the Word of God.

I remember years ago, a decade ago, I would've called this Sunday a congregational tremor. We'll have a bunch of people walk out. I don't think we lose anybody. We'll lose nobody that loves the Word of God. Because you just want to know what's God say. We want to do what God wants. We want to do it his way. Let's just honor him. If we honor him, we know we get to experience his blessing and his fruit and his righteousness and his joy. And if you're a man, I want to tell you, perhaps God's calling you to be one of those faithful proclaimers. Be obedient to what he's called you. If you're a woman, God's called you to be faithful with what he's called you to do. Be the fullness of what God called you to be as a woman and celebrate that. And let's celebrate men and let's celebrate women. And let's realize this is the day the Lord has made.

Let's center our hope back on the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's center our joy back on the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's have our hearts prepared for the Lord Jesus Christ so we can live for him in all of his ways. And as we live for him in all of his ways, let's live with great expectation of where God is taking us and what God wants. And let's thank God that we got to hear his Word today. Let's praise God that he's speaking to our hearts, and whether we experience conviction, or joy, or admonition, or blessing, or encouragement, or whatever it was, know that that's the Lord speaking to you because he loves you so much he's never ever going to let you go. And that's what he wants for you. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

How am I going to make it through? The joy of the Lord is your strength. How am I going to get through this trial? The joy of the Lord is your strength. How long is this going to go on? The joy of the Lord is your strength. You know what I'm saying? That's what Ezra was teaching the people. That's what I'm teaching you. And God is faithful to his Word. If we accept it, we put it into practice and we go out and live it, God has a way of using that for his glory. Amen. Amen. Would you stand with me?

Our Father in heaven, we give you all glory, honor and praise. And Lord, we're reminded today that the joy of the Lord is our strength. Lord, as we sing back to you and respond to you the way you've shown us, Lord, let us thank you for your Word. We love you, we bless you, and we praise you. And it's in Jesus' name, we do it. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise for his Word today?

