



Message **Transcript** Getting Started

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Pastor Jeff:

Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise for who you are. And Lord, we ask that in these moments that we look into your Word, that you would do a great work in us. Because Lord, we as a people believe that every time your Word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you are speaking. So speak directly to us, Lord. And so, now, for all those who have gathered, who desire to hear the Word of the Lord, spoken directly to your heart will believe what Jesus tells you and who will by faith put into practice what He shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen? Amen.

Over the last couple of weeks in the book of Nehemiah, we've been talking about the fact that God wants to build greatness in and through your life as an individual and through us corporately as a church. And then last week, we talked about the vision and unique way that He uses each one of us to do that. But I don't know about many of you, when you hear things that are motivating to you, do you ever wonder, how do I get started? How do I make that work? What's the next step? What do I do?

It's really interesting. If you go to Amazon or you go to a Christian bookstore and you start looking up Christian titles, there's how-to books for about everything. There's how-to books on marriage. There's how-to books on parenting. There's how-to books on stewarding your money. There's how-to books on singleness. I mean, if you really studied the titles of most Christian authors, you would ask yourself, do Christians know how to do anything? Because they're all how-to books. And yet for so many of us,

when we're motivated by the spirit and God begins to put things into our heart and we are fired up because as born again believers, we know that we're empowered by the Holy Spirit and God does want to do a great work in our heart, we sometimes ask the question, what do I do? How do I even get started in this? Because what I'm feeling in my heart, it seems bigger than a small step. I don't even know what I'm supposed to do.

And if you've ever wondered what the next step looks like for you, I believe that God has a word for you today. I believe He wants to speak to you and tell you what steps that you can take so that you're aligning your life with the Word of God, so that Jesus Christ is, through His Holy Spirit, living in and through you more fully and you're experiencing the greatest benefit of joy and He's experienced the greatest benefit of all the glory. So if you ever wanted to know, how do I get started? Lord, I'm ready. What's next? God has a word for you.

I want to encourage you this morning to open up your Bibles to Nehemiah chapter two. Nehemiah chapter two. We're going to begin in verse 11 this morning. And while you're turning there, I'll just set up what we've been talking about so far. If you've been with us, this will be review. But Nehemiah, who's the cup bearer for the king, gets word that Jerusalem and all of its walls are burned down, that the nation is a disgrace. Things aren't looking good. And when Nehemiah gets the word, he sits down, he weeps, he laments, cries, prays, fast for a period of about four months waiting to see what the Lord's going to do. And in chapter two, his prayer is answered. The king that he serves asked, "Why are you so unhappy?" And it was nerve wracking because

Nehemiah's number one job was to keep the king happy. He's the chief of staff for the nation.

And he says, "Well, why shouldn't I be when the nation that I come from is broken down and its walls are down and our people are a disgrace?" The king says, "Well, what do you want?" Nehemiah gives him a specific time. He's going to be gone. He asks for letters so that when he's heading back, he can get by these other kingdoms. He also asks for help with timber and what they're going to need to rebuild. And the king grants him his wish. And so he takes a step of faith and goes. But the question then becomes, what's he going to do as he continues to take these steps of faith? How does he continue to do what God wants him to do? And that's where the story picks up.

And this morning I want to highlight four areas of getting started, four steps that you can take as you get started, if you, as a born again believer, want to walk with Christ, how do I do it? How can my life have that kind of impact? How can my life truly make a difference? How can I experience the greatest joy of the Lord? And how can I make the biggest impact for the kingdom bringing God glory? Here's what he would say. Notice what the story picks up. In Nehemiah chapter two starting in verse 11. Here's all he says. He says, "So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days," and that's all it says, but there's a lot packed into that verse. And here's what that verse tells us. When you're getting started, here's what you need to do, you need to willingly leave the comfortable behind and continue to take steps of faith. You need to willingly leave the comfortable behind and continue to take steps of faith.

Notice what Nehemiah did. Nehemiah didn't just say, "Okay, fine, I'll go." He leaves. He takes with them that entourage because the king gave him some army officials and others. He goes through. He gives the letters to the kings that are going to grant him passage, and then guess what? He keeps stepping because here's what I find, the greater steps of faith you take, the more the enemy wants to remind you about what you just left. When you start to step in the direction that God's taking you, He'll remind you of all the comfort that you had and what you just left. Taking steps of faith requires continuing to take steps of faith because it's always more comfortable where you are than where God's going to take you.

Now, how comfortable was it for Nehemiah? Nehemiah, as we said, was cup bearer for the king, second in command really in some ways in all the kingdom. He had staff. He had income. He had resources at his disposal. He was honored. He was revered. He made key decisions. He left all of that comfort to do what? To go to Jerusalem. He doesn't have an income in Jerusalem. He doesn't know who the people are in Jerusalem that he's going to meet. He doesn't have all the resources he's going to need even though he was given some. And yet, when he gets by the kings with some of his timber, what's he do? He continues to go all the way to Jerusalem.

Here's the point. When you start taking steps of faith with God, look back. When you start taking steps of faith with God, don't stop taking steps of faith. What the enemy loves to do is lie to you and tell you about the comforts that you had before and all that you just left behind. And no matter what step of faith the Lord is having you

take, the enemy will always remind you of how comfortable you were before you took that step. And the reality is you knew when you took that step of faith, there was a reason that you took it.

Nehemiah was burdened by the Lord for what was taking place in Jerusalem. He was burdened for his nation. He had this on his heart so much that he's not just going to take one step or two-step, he's going to continue stepping until he arrives at the destination that God has for him.

Where's our destination when we meet Jesus face to face? Until then, keep taking steps of faith. Don't be the person that reminisces about your step of faith. It's okay to reminisce about steps of faith. I remember 20 years ago, I did. I remember 30 years ago. It's okay to reminisce. Don't make that your last step of faith. Don't tell stories about the same step of faith you took 20 or 30 years ago. Have new steps that you're taking, new things you're trusting. Why? Because in Hebrews 11:6 what does it say? Without faith, that means without taking steps of faith, without taking new steps of faith, without trusting in the Lord for new things, without faith, it is impossible to please God.

James says it this way in James 4:17, "Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins." You sit in church, you hear the Word of the Lord, God prompts your heart for something and he prompted your heart again and he prompted your heart again and he prompted your heart again and you're like, "I'm not doing anything with that," you're sinning. When he prompts you, what do I pray before I preach? It's not just a rote prayer, but it's a reminder to you to say, are you ready to

hear Jesus? Are you going to believe what he tells you? And then what? Are you willing to go put into practice what he shows you? Will you go apply the Word how he shows you? Because if all you do is hear it and you don't apply it and you're just a hearer of the Word and not a doer of the Word, you'll never experience all the greatness that God is hardwired inside of you through His Holy Spirit. Amen?

So continue to take steps of faith. And I specifically underline the word steps, not leaps. Not leaps, steps. Everything in the kingdom is a step of faith. It's not a leap. When you hear messages like this, if you're prompted, sometimes people get all worked up and be like, "I guess that means I got to quit my job and I guess I got to go to seminary and I guess I got to change everything." That may not be wisdom. That may be stupid. I mean, sometimes there's things that God is building here, and if you're faithful with little and you continue to be faithful with little and then you continue to be faithful with more and then you continue to be faithful with more, the next step for you that's a little step will seem like it's big to somebody else, but God has been building things.

So when we read the story about David slaying Goliath, it's like, "Oh little kid, man, he slayed the giant. I want to slay giants." But what did David say? He's been a shepherd. He goes, "I killed the lion. I've killed the bear. I mean, what's this Philistine doing in our land? Who is he? He's not God's anointed. We're God's anointed. I've done this before. This is nothing new to me." And that's why God has a unique curriculum designed for each one of you. As you continue to take steps of faith, it will prepare you for the next steps of faith and the next steps of faith and the next steps of

faith.

Nehemiah left Persia. He's on his way to Jerusalem. He does the things he's doing, but he doesn't turn and go back. He doesn't hand off the timber to some of the Jews that are living in Jerusalem. He doesn't hand off the notes and say, "Man, I'm going to take safe passage back. I'm glad I did my part and got him the resources. Now I'm going to go back and be the chief of staff in Persia again because I want to be the cup bearer." He left his comfort behind. And friends, anytime you take a step of faith, there will always be some level of comfort that makes it difficult to take the step of faith because even if you're uncomfortable in your situation, it's still something that you know. When you take a step of faith, you don't know how it's going to be.

And so the way that you grow with the Lord is taking steps of faith as He's guiding you, take a step of faith in the direction that He tells you, and use wisdom. Have other Christian brothers and sisters that are in the Lord, have been in the Lord longer, "Hey, this is what I'm sensing. What might be the next step of faith? What might it look like for me to do this?" Take the next step. Always keep on stepping.

In the case you're wondering, because you're sitting here and you're saying, "Well, Pastor Jeff, I know I'm not a preacher. And Pastor Jeff, I heard the invitation to the worship team. That's for sure not me. What else is there?" Here's what I would say. Think about what Jesus Christ cares about. What does he care about? Why did he come? He came for his church. He died for his church. He rose for his church. He's coming back for his church. He established, he said he would establish his church and

he did establish his church. He said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." What does Jesus Christ care most about in the world? His church.

Let me just say this. You were not gifted by God for you. You were gifted by God for God. You say, "Well, where do my gifts best play out?" Listen, listen, in the church. If you're looking, I don't know where it is because when we hear messages like this, we think it's out there somewhere, influence out there. It's more wealth, it's more influence. No, when you hear messages like this, a good first step would be a member of a local church and serve it well. And you might say, "Well, I don't even like brave." That's cool. That's okay. If brave's not church, find a local church, go into that church, become a member in that church and find a way to serve that church with your resources, with your time, and with your best energy. Because here's what I find, when people are serving the church, that's how they're growing in Christ. And how can you serve the Lord if you're not serving what he cares about the most? So start there.

"Pastor Jeff, you don't understand. I'm a way better leader than the leaders you have in the church." Okay. I might grant you that, but if you can't serve under poor leadership, you can't lead people. If you don't know how to serve first, how are you going to lead? Because we think leadership is, "I'm going to lead and everybody's going to listen to me," you don't know what leadership is. "I'm going to be a parent. When I'm a parent, I promise, my kids are never going to do that." Yeah, you say that until you have kids, right? I mean, come on. God puts you in positions where you're bumping up against it, where not everything's good and you got a bad boss and you got a bad teacher and you got bad leadership and you got bad... Why? Because he's

training you to see things so that when you're in this position, you do it differently. Don't fight that. Serve the church, serve his church. Go all in. Wherever you go, just go all in.

"There's a great return on investment now and in the life to come," Jesus said. You put me first. Well, what does Jesus put first? His church. But if you want to sit on the sidelines and talk bad about the church, here's what you're saying, "God, I don't care about how you gifted me. I don't care about what you gave me, and I certainly don't care about what you care about, but I'm just going to be out here on the fringe doing some things." That doesn't please the Lord. Serve His church. Your gifts and God's greatness in you is to start through the church to build the body so what? So we can go advance the kingdom and make a difference in the world, but it always starts here. Your number one step is to be a member of a local church and serve it well. It's Jesus's vehicle for evangelism and discipleship in our world today.

So here's what I would say. Keep stepping. Be willing to leave the comfortable, continue to take steps of faith in the direction God's leading you. And here's something about the way God leads. We want God to give us a blueprint or a lit up runway and show us every turn that's coming two, three four, five years from now. If I go this way, what am I going to get, God? God doesn't do that. God gives you enough light for the next step. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. He'll give you enough to say, do I go this way, this way or this way? And he'll show you and you step here and take the light with you and then He shows you the next way. He doesn't map it all out. That's why prayer is so important because as you take steps of faith, you have to continue to listen to Jesus. You can't just arrive at your destination say, "I got it

now. Now everybody will listen to me." God doesn't want people to listen to you. God wants people to listen to Him and what He wants. So, willingly leave your comfort. Be willing to continue to take steps of faith in the direction that God leads.

Number two is this. When you're getting started, familiarize yourself with what is broken prior to addressing the solutions. Become very familiar with what is actually broken so that you have personal experience with it before you start providing solutions. Notice what he says. In verse 12, after he came to Jerusalem, he was there for three days. We don't know exactly what he was doing for those three days, but if scripture's any indicator since he'd spent four months praying and fasting and weeping and lamenting, I think prayer was a big part of what he was doing where he was asking God for wisdom for what he's about ready to see.

And then in verse 12, notice what it says, "And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem. And there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding." What'd he do? He got up in the night. He didn't make a grand entrance. He didn't come in and said, "Hey, I'm Nehemiah. I'm here to save you." He arose in the night when everybody else is asleep. He didn't tell any of the officials or anybody else what he was about ready to do. He didn't tell any... Even the men that were with him, he selected a few good men to come, "Let's go survey the city," but he didn't tell them what he was doing. Why? Because he wanted to survey it with his own eyes. He wanted to see it and feel it so he would know just how bad it was. He had heard his brother and a couple others come back and say, "The walls burned down." He'd wept

about it. He had heard about it, but now he's going to go see it for himself.

Friends, we live in a broken world. Everywhere we go, there's brokenness. You can talk about brokenness forever. And the reason it's broken is because every single person's broken. You're broken. I'm broken. That's why there's brokenness in the world. But sometimes we just hear people talk about the brokenness and we think we understand everything, so we're providing all the solutions. If God's calling you to do something, go survey the brokenness. Go see just how broken it is. Go feel the brokenness. Go see what it is so that you know how to offer a solution.

If you went to a doctor and you said, "I have a rash," and they're like, "I have a cream," but it turns out that there was something in your bloodstream that was going to kill you, they're not doing a good job of exploring. You want to go to a doctor that's going to do a thorough investigation. If you go to a financial planner and you're like, "I'm broke, get me some money," and he says, "Just throw your money to me, it'll be fine," you don't want that. You want somebody, let me help you understand why you're in the situation that you're in. Let me understand how you got there. Let me figure out your whole situation so we can start working on a plan to get you where you need to go.

I mean, anybody that we would value would listen to us first. Don't you hate it when people start giving you advice and you think they don't even know what's going on? Anybody ever had that experience except me? When people start giving you advice, I didn't ask for your advice. They don't even know the situation. They don't know what's going on. But when people are truly investigative and they're truly trying to

find out and they truly love you and they truly care and they see the brokenness, then they can say, "Hey, this is what I'm sensing. This is what I see. Now I can tell you this is what you might want to do." Amen?

And sometimes we don't go inspect the walls. Sometimes we're not really understanding why they're all broken down. And here's the reality. I'm talking corporately, but I'm also talking individually. So let's just talk with us. Sometimes we're dealing with stuff in our own lives and we're broken, but we don't want God to tell us about our broken. We just want Him to fix it. We pray prayers, "God fix me. Fix this, fix this situation. Change this, change that person. Change my boss, change my employees. Change this. Change this." And God's like, "I'm not talking about any of that. I'm trying to get to you. I'm wanting you to pray the prayer. Search me and try me, oh Lord, see if there's any offensive way in me and lead me to the way everlasting." You got to know how broken you are before God can heal where you're at.

I mean, just think about this. If you're booking a flight to go to Florida, one of the questions that they're going to ask online is, where are you flying from? You're going to type in DIA, we're leaving in DIA. If they just left that up to chance and said, I want to go to Florida, and they're like, "Cool. We'll pick your departure city, New Jersey." It doesn't help you. You have to know where you're at in order to get where you're trying to go. In other words, if you don't understand the depth of your depravity, God can't bring the depth of healing you need for your depth of depravity.

Can I just be honest? I mean, some of you are single and have been praying for

a spouse for years. Do you know why you're single? Some of you are single because it's God's gift in your life and it's God's grace in your life and He wants you to be single in this time or maybe longer so that you can get to know Him and you can use this as a gift to serve Him even greater than if you were married. Some of you are single because you don't know how broken you are on the inside and you keep asking God to bring Mr. or Mrs. Wright when all the times God's like, "I could bring them, but you ain't healthy enough for them yet. I need to show you what's wrong with you."

And I'm not just preaching to the choir like I got it all figured out and y'all don't know. About two decades ago, a little over two decades ago, I remember sitting in a counseling office. I remember my dating life and my dating relationship weren't all that. And I remember I sat down in front of this counselor and I went to see somebody and I told him this at the beginning. I said, "Listen, I want to tell you about my dating life. I know I'm the constant variable in it. It never ends well and I know I'm the problem and I don't know why I'm the problem and I need you to tell me why I'm the problem and I'll change whatever it is."

And now that I've done counseling for a long time, I know that guy was sitting across from me like, "I love this guy. I can help him." And that day I shared my story and it was cathartic and I got it out and I was like, counseling is good. And I went back the next week. And I was sharing for about five minutes when he stopped me and he said, "Let me just ask you two questions." And I remember exactly what he asked me and I just began to weep and I began to see where all the brokenness came from and where it had started and how I had built into it and all that stuff. And I began to heal. I

went home and wept all that day because I had never even seen it in my life. Sure, it was obvious to a lot of other people around me, but it wasn't obvious to me.

And when you're willing to look into your own heart and say, "God, what's wrong with me? Am I the problem?" God can fix it. Oh, how I'd love to be in a marriage counseling. This has never happened to me. It's never even happened with Kim when I went to counseling where one person would get in there and the first spouse would say, "Hey, pastor, before we get started, I just want you to know I'm the problem in our relationship. It's me. It's totally me. Just tell me what to do." And while they were talking, the other spouse interrupted like, "No, no, no, it's me. I'm the problem. Just fix me." If you had that, do you know how long marriage counseling would last? A week or two. Right? Why? Because we think marriage is about happiness and the other person making us happy when marriage is about holiness and us making Christ making us holy. Amen?

And we think it's all about us. But if we don't look into our own lives as to what's broken. I mean listen, I know some of you here have gone through a tragic divorce and you have the pain of it, and some of you would say, and I know some of your spouses and say, "Well, they had infidelity or drug users, or they did all these things," and yeah, that's true, but have you ever asked God to show you what's in you? How did you contribute to that? Were you an enabler, or the things in my heart, God, that need to change? Or why did I choose this person in the first place? How do you want to grow my confidence as a result? God's willing to redeem everything. And He loves you and

He doesn't show you brokenness to show you what all horrible person you are. He shows you your brokenness so He can show you the depth of what He wants to repair.

You don't have to stay where you're at. You can get onto bigger and better things. That's why you love stories of testimonies where somebody was here and now they're there. And most Christians would say, "I don't have a story like that." Any broken person with a depth of depravity has a story like that if they'll let God fill them. Amen? Why are we so afraid to do that?

I mean, if you're broke, financially broke, there's a reason that you're financially broke. Do you know why you're broke? "Well, it's my mom and dad and it was the way I was raised." Okay, stop being a victim and figure out what God says about what you're doing. There's so many scriptures that tell you how to tithe, how to give, how to steward, how to save, how to invest, how to do the different things so that you spend less than you make. I mean, there are credible principles in scripture so that you can live a life where you're not dependent upon a job or you're dependent upon the Lord to provide and take care of what you need to take care of.

I mean, there's all sorts of scriptures on everything, but many times we're very ruthless with other people. You know those people out there, "They got massive problems. Have you ever met them? Have you ever seen this person? You ever met my family?" But we're not that ruthless with ourselves. And sometimes what God's trying to do is put a magnifying glass on us because things happen and they trajectory to a way where we sometimes, and every one of us gets there, where we find ourselves in a situation where we're like, "How did I get here? I never thought I

would've been here."

It's like Proverbs tells us in Proverbs 24:30-34. It's one of Professor Hendricks, Howard Hendricks, favorite scriptures. We used to study it together. He said, "I passed by the field of the sluggard and the vineyard of the man lacking scents. And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles. Its surface was covered with nettles and its stonewall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it. I looked and received instruction, a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest. Then your poverty will come as a robber, and your want like an armed man."

How did I get here so fast? You didn't. It was over a period of time. Then corporately, how do we get where we are as a nation? How do we get where we are? It was oozing over time. It just oozes a little bit, and then it's like the frog in the kettle. We just get comfortable with garbage and we're like, "Well, that's just the way it is," but not if you believe the word of God. It can't stay where it is because when you start surveying the world, if you have a heart for God, a heart for His Word and a heart for prayer, you'll start having to disdain for the way in which the world makes the decisions it makes. It will bother you.

I know for me what it was after serving the Lord, I've served the Lord now for 30 some years and He called me to preach and I've been preaching for over 30 years. But I had this love hate relationship with the church. I wanted to preach. I wanted to see people one to Christ. I just wasn't that fired up about the church because my personal experience in the church was the same people sitting in the same seats every week

and nobody ever changed. And we didn't do any of the things in my church that we do here. The Word of God wasn't opened. It wasn't proclaimed. We didn't pray as a church. We worship, but it was more routine and liturgy than it was actually people that were fired up about Jesus. That was just my experience. I'm like, I hate that. I don't want that.

But as God began to walk me through this and show me, "Jeff, I will build my church. And Jeff, the church is the hope of the world. And Jeff, you don't hate the church. You love the church and what you're seeing is what's broken in the church. And you can stand on the sidelines and talk bad about it all day long, but at the end of the day, I'm calling you into it to go make a difference." And I repented and came to plant one. And by God's grace, will do this till the day that I die. Amen?

Here's why, all the garbage you see in our culture is a result of a broken church. That's why. It's not this community or that community or this political party or that political party. It's that the church of Jesus Christ has stayed so silent and forgets the fact that we're in a fight for the souls of men and women and for the glory of God in this generation. If the church would rise up and be all that Jesus Christ wants it to be, the culture will follow. The culture will change. I believe it with my wholehearted. I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing. I'm not preaching so that we grow more membership. I'm preaching so that we grow more disciples that are on fire to fight for the Lord. And we've forgotten what the church is.

I mean, I hear statements like this all the time. "The church, Pastor Jeff, is not a country club for saints. It's hospital for sinners." To which I say, "It's neither." It's not a

hangout for saints. It's not a hospital for sinners. It is a spirit-filled army for the Lord Jesus Christ that will fight for the fulfillment of the great commission. That's what it is.

Now, in an army, you have medics. In an army, there are people that get hurt. In an army, there are seasons where you have to heal, totally get that, but not for the rest of your life. And so what do we do? I mean, there are so many churches in our culture that don't even take this book seriously. They don't open it. They don't preach from it. When you don't preach from this book or when you're listening to a pastor that's not getting his ideas from this book, here's actually what's going on, here's what's going on. Pastor doesn't use this, doesn't even bring it to the pulpit. And I'm not talking about a specific bound Bible. I'm talking about the Word of God. I know I'm getting older. Maybe someday I'll have it 22 font on a computer screen. I get it.

But if the Word of God is not being taught, here's what the pastor's saying, "Guys, I'm very, very important. Jesus, shut up. Nobody wants to hear you. You're just going to offend everybody anyway, so you go stand over there. I have great stories I'd like to tell you. And I'd like to be popular and I'd like you to like our church. And I'm going to say things that will tickle your ears so that you'll like me and you'll come back next week and bring all your friends." That's what not preaching the Word really is. Unfortunately, for those preachers, they're going to stand to give an account to that God that they told to shut his mouth. I'm not going to stand in that line. I'm not going to stand in that line. I never will stand in that line.

So as long as the Lord brings me breath, I got nothing special to tell you other

than that the Word of God is what you need to hear, the Word of God. And when the church doesn't preach the Word, then nobody believes in the authority of the Word. And when nobody believes in the authority of the Word, then they don't stand for the Word. And certainly people in our generation aren't dying for the Word. But when you read back through the New Testament, people read the Bible like, "I love Peter. So bold. I love John the Baptist. So bold. I love Paul. So bold. I love Jesus Christ. So bold." They were all martyred. They weren't at a country club and they weren't at a hospital. They were in a fight for the fulfillment of the great commission in their lifetime. That's what they were doing. They realized that we were in a fight for the souls of men and women.

Let me just say this. I mean, listen, listen, listen. Parents, listen to me. Middle schoolers, would you listen to me? High school students, would you listen to me? Just because your mom and dad love Jesus and you come to church does not mean you're saved. Just because you come and fake it on Sunday and then you go live a morally Monday through Saturday does not mean that if you meet Jesus, you're saved. You too must repent and believe the gospel. You too must take steps of faith. You too must live it out. And parents listen to me. There's nothing in the Bible that says, "I just got to get my kids to 18. Once I ship them off to college, everybody sleeps around. Everybody gets drunk. That's just normative. And then they'll kind of find their way. And when they're 25 or in this generation 40, they'll get a job and they'll move on with their lives." There's nowhere you find that. Where do you find that, mom and dad?

Jesus wants you to develop godly kids, not happy kids. And young people, I'm

telling you, I love you enough to tell you that if you're faking it with Jesus, you can fake out your mom and dad, you can fake out me, you can fake out brave, you can fake out anybody we want. I'm telling you this, you're not faking out the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to repent and give your life to him. Amen?

I don't know if you know about that I'm pretty passionate about this subject. And I wish I could tell you I've repented, I've had people speaking in my life. Two weeks ago, after service, there were something that we're trying to build to do a better job of helping our people be on mission. And I was watching some of these things and I'm like, it's not going well. So I sat down three of our key leaders right after service and we're going to have a meeting for about an hour or something. And 15 minutes into the meeting I'm like, "Stop." I'm like, "Is this the problem?" And I told them, "Yeah." I'm like, "And that's my fault for the problem?" They said, "Pretty much." I'm like, "Okay, cool. Let's end the meeting. I'm the problem. We're 15 minutes in. Totally solved. I'll fix the problem."

You have people in your life that can talk to you about what problem needs to be fixed? Church, listen to me. If we'll get before the Lord, and we'll actually admit the fact, "Yeah, we're a sinner, but it's not just theological I'm a sinner. But Lord, that sin has me broken. That's why I do some of the things I do. Some of them I'm aware of, some of them I'm not. Lord, would you just show me the next step? Would you show me what I need to do?" and God speaks to you, He can redeem any depth of brokenness that you've gone through. That's who our God is. Your best days are always ahead if you let all your brokenness come out before the Lord. Amen? That's

what He wants from us.

So Nehemiah is familiarizing himself with what's broken prior to addressing solutions. I mean, notice this passage. I'll keep reading it. I'll go through it pretty quick. In verses 13 through 16. So he goes out at night with the animal he is riding on a couple of guys. He goes, "So I went out at night by the valley gate and in the direction of the dragons well and onto the refuse gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire." He had heard all this, but now he's seen it. "Then I passed on to the fountain gate and the king's pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass because it was such a shambles. So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the valley gate again and again. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done, nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work."

Now, we could spend time on that, but here's what I want you to see. He went all around the city. He investigated everywhere. He heard the wall was broken, so he goes to every single gate. He sees it, he feels it, he notices it, and he wants to feel the pain of it because the people that are living there don't feel the pain of it. They say, "Well, that's just normative because that's where we live." And anytime we let sin creep into our lives, we think what is abnormal and what God doesn't want, we consider, well, that's just kind of the way the world is. That's just kind of how it works these days. That's just kind of how it goes.

I have textbooks from a Dallas public school, 1963. Do you know what they

taught in the Dallas Public School in 1963? They taught Old Testament and New Testament survey in the public schools in Dallas in 1963, probably better than most or many of our seminaries today. They don't teach that in public school anymore. It's a sewer. It's a swamp. People are not graduating from the public school saying, "I believe in the authority of the word of God. God said He created everything out of nothing. He did it in six literal days. The world's 6,000 years old. There's two genders, male and female. They're both equal in the side of God, both completely loved by him and have distinct gender responsibilities in the church, in the home and in the community. I believe in one race. I believe in hard work. I believe in all that." If they're getting that at all, they're not getting it from the indoctrination of what the public school is teaching. They're just not. And yet, what do we say? "Well, that's just it. That's secular. This is sacred."

Do you know why our politicians are screwed up? Do you know why our schools are screwed up? Do you know why the world screwed up? Because the church has not rose up, because the church refuses to speak into it. Here's what happens. The church doesn't realize it's in a fight and Satan's like, "You're right. You're right. Just stay in the church and keep everybody happy. And while you're doing that, I'm taking the schools. I'm taking politics. I'm taking your kids. I'm taking marriages. I'm taking everything away. I got it all, but you guys have fun in your church until I come take that away too."

But at some point in time, some point in time, if the church of Jesus Christ would just rise up and say, "No, we're here for the glory of God and we're here for the

worship and adoration of his son, and we're here to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and we're an army for the things of God, and we will speak out, live out and do what the Lord has," he will change the culture. He'll do it. There's great hope. There's great hope, but quit looking around for somebody else because he's looking to do it for you. It's just that we as a church have lost our saltiness.

The Bible says we're salt and lie. Well, what does salt do? It preserves, decaying, but if you're not salty, everything just decays. The world around us is decaying. It is a cesspool. Now, keep in mind, God loves the world. He created it. The world is the Lords and everything in it. He loves the people in the world because He created them, but He hates the world's system and where it's going. And yet for many of us, even what we bring into our house on TV and what we watch 10 feet away from us, we would never let happen in front of us. You wouldn't let your kids have that in their bedroom, but you're going to bring it into your house.

I mean, what are we doing? "Well, that's just normal." It's not normal. It's not normal if Jesus was sitting next to you saying, "Hey, you want to watch this with me?" I mean, have you ever considered what Jesus thinks? That's why prayer is so important because the closer you get to God and the more you have heart, eyes and mind for how he sees the world, the more you're going to realize it's time to rise up. It's time to live up. And I believe it with my whole heart. I believe it with my whole heart. I believe if we as a church will do what God wants us to do, He will change all the things that we want see changed. I'm tired of a world that's tolerant for everything except the authority of God's word and the Lord Jesus Christ being put on display. They're

intolerant of that, but they're tolerant of everything else.

Now, I'm going to continue to proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the most important message for every single person in the planet, whether you believe it or not, because that is what God has called us to do. And if you're going to get started with the Lord, this is what you need to do. Now, listen, if you're in a position where you're going through brokenness, I don't want to know how bad it is. I don't want to do this. I want to tell you something. Your pain, your anxiety, your worry, your doubt, your discomfort, your fear is a megaphone for God to speak to you.

I know several of you, you're in severe pain right now. I mean, even as I'm talking like, dude, please don't even tell me it's me because there's so many things going on around me. I'm in such pain. I couldn't even ask that question. But if you do, God will speak to you. I mean, it'd be so loud and clear. It's in our times of pain and when we're down and when we're out that the Lord is shouting to us because He wants us to hear some things that we wouldn't have otherwise heard. It's his great love for us. That's why when we go through tough season, sometimes we come out of them and say, "It's a hard season, but I tell you what, I was super close to the Lord. I'm different than I was before I went through it, but I never want to go through another one of those again."

Friends, we're salt. We're light. If we hide our light under a bushel, we let Satan blow it out, what happens? The darkness gets darker. It's time for the light to shine. Light always overcomes darkness, and I want to encourage you familiarize yourself

with what's broken in you and in the world before addressing solutions.

Number three is this, once you've done that, then you're ready to address it. Then you can do this, show people their depth of failure and what they must change and how God will help. Show people their depth of failure, what they must change and how God will help. Many churches don't want to show people the depth of their failure. They want to tell people, "In your depth of failure, don't worry about it. God loves you no matter what." God does love you, but that doesn't matter. What matters is that you know what's going on in your life so you don't have to stay in the same predicament that you're in.

Notice what Nehemiah says. He goes, "Then I said to them, you see the bad situation we are in that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates are burned by fire." Now, why would he have to tell them that they've been living in it? You see how bad it is in our culture? You see how people are living far from God. Why would we have to tell you that? Because when people are living in it, they get comfortable with it and you need somebody to call out that that is not normal. When Jesus Christ comes back, He's not going to consider that normal. He's going to judge it all. And we need to prepare the way of the Lord because He's coming soon. We need to live in such a way that if the Lord met us today, we'd be like, "Come, Lord Jesus. I'm ready for you." Right?

So he do? He tells them, "Do you see the walls?" They've seen them for months. They don't care. Nobody's lifting a finger. Nobody's changing the wall. Everybody's like, "It's just the way we are. We're disgraced to all the other nations. It's just the way it is.

It's how it's always going to be." Why would they do that? Because the church does the same thing. "We're just a church. We love Jesus, but we can't really make a difference and we've been praying for revivals. Never happened." It hasn't happened because you haven't stood up and let God deal with your brokenness and ask him to change you and ask him to change us so that he can move. And we're comfortable with mediocrity in every single way, and that's why we don't see God move. Because if you're comfortable with mediocrity and you pray for revival, God's not going to answer it because what if God brought 20,000 more people next weekend to brave? Most people would be upset because they had to park like two miles away than they would be the 20,000 people came to brave. We don't care. We don't want revival. We want comfort, and they can come as long as they don't take my seat because I kind of like this area, right?

You know what I'm saying? I mean, let's just be honest. If we're really going to pray for revival, then what are you willing to do to change so revival can happen? What if it meant you didn't have a seat here and you had to watch online for a while until we get a bigger place? You cool with that? You say that now, but I hear you.

But here's what happens, I'm just telling you, he points it out to them. He says, "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach." Hey, let's come do this thing because God can redeem what's broken. Hey, church, come now. Let's do this thing. We can be the tip of the spear for what Christ wants to do in his church in our nation. Let's rebuild this thing. Let's put Jesus Christ on display, let's put his holiness on display, let's put the gospel on display and let's see what God

will do if we live it out. Amen?

Then they said, "I also told them..." He gave testimony, "I also told them how the hand of God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words, which he had spoken to me." Then they said, "Let us arise and build. So they put their hand to do the good work." So he starts telling them, "God's with me, y'all. I was the chief of staff here. I had everything that I needed. I was a cup bearer to the king, but I'm here because God spoke to me about what He wants to do here. And I'm telling you, He's given us favor because He brought all this timber and He brought these military leaders. We can do this." And when they heard how God was doing something through that man, then they said, "Well, then we want to be a part of that too because we would love to see our culture change." So they put their hand to do the work.

It requires work because sometimes we pray for God to do something when we're not willing to lift a finger. "God, change the culture." Okay, what are you willing to do to change it? "Nothing, but you change the culture. We don't like living here." What are you willing to do? You got to work because if you don't work, really what you are and what our world has bred is a victim mentality. We have victims everywhere. "Well, I'm just the way I am because of," And then we fill in the blank. "It was my mom. It was my dad. It was my husband. It was my wife, it's my kids. It was this teacher I had in third grade. It was this coach. It was, I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks. We didn't have the income. We didn't have this, or my parents were wealthy and they were out there. They never took care of him." We have excuses for everything. It's called

victimization. And the enemy loves it when you play victim because when you're a victim, then guess what you get to do? You get to blame others. You get to rationalize about yourself. You get to lie and you get to make excuses.

So with all love, brave church, stop being a victim. You are exactly where you are because of the choices you've made, right? You're a victor. You're a winner. You're more than a conqueror. And if God before you, who can be against you? Take responsibility and trust God. Quit blaming everybody else for where you're at. It's not them. If you had a one-on-one encounter with Jesus when you're sitting down saying, "Hey, the reason I'm why I'm mad is because of them, them, them, them, them," here's what God would say, "That was the curriculum I put in your life for you to give me glory and you never took advantage of it. I'm the sovereign one that put all those things in you. I was doing it to build your character. I was doing it to build your heart. I was doing it for the specific mission I had for you. Would you stop making excuses and start trusting me?"

I love you enough to tell you that. Stop blaming everybody else. Don't blame the church. Don't blame the pastor. Don't blame your family. Don't blame your neighborhood. Don't blame your politician, as tempting as all those things are. Don't blame them. Take responsibility and call people up to a higher level and let Jesus do what he needs to do.

And then finally is this, once you've done that, I mean, if you're walking with the Lord and you're really taking steps of faith and you're familiarizing yourself with the problem and you're calling it out and you're inviting people into this thing, then there's

going to be some opposition, as we talked about last week, and notice what happens. But when Sanballat the Horonite, who we've already talked about, and Tobiah the Ammonite official, who we already talked about, and Gesham, this is a new guy, the Arab who heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

When you step out to do the thing God is calling you to do, there'll be some people are close to you that will ridicule you for what you choose. The Bible says that anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. The Bible says, "Do not be surprised at the painful trial that you are suffering." So here's what you need to do. When you're stepping out in faith, it could be somebody close to you, it could be somebody in the church, it could be somebody outside the church, it could be a family member, it could be a friend, if you're stepping with Jesus and you're leaving comfort and you're leaving some relationships in order to do what God says, you're going to have people mock and ridicule you and tell you, "You're being stupid. What are you doing? If you go there, I don't think we're going to hang out. And who do you think you are and why are you doing this? And this really isn't the way? And are you against our culture? Do you think this?"

That's going to happen to every single person that takes a step of faith. And that's when many of us turn around like, "Oh, you're right. I'd rather be a friend with you and be comfortable than do what God wants me to do." Don't do that. You keep taking steps of faith and then do this, number four, tell your enemies how they will see God's blessings but will not experience them. Tell your enemies, "You're going to see

the blessing of the Lord, but you're not going to experience any of it unless, of course, you repent and you become part of what God's doing."

So I answered them verse 20 and said to them, "The God of heaven will give us success." It's not me. I'm not the one doing it. God's going to be the one that gives us success. Therefore, we are his servants and we will arise and build. We're going to do the work. God's going to be the one that gives us success. We're going to do the work, but you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem. You have no inheritance. You're going to see all the good God does. You're going to see them do it through us, but you're not going to experience any of it because you're not on God's side. You're not with what God is doing.

And here's where I love this. Nehemiah believed, like I believe all the apostles believe, we get to see God's goodness in our day if we do things God's way. I mean, think about Psalm 27. The last two verses are two of my favorite verses in the whole Bible where David pins this and said, and I think about it, when I think about our culture, "I would've despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." When I look at our nation, I'd be like, there's no hope here unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of living. Then he says this, "Wait for the Lord. Be strong. Let your heart take courage." Yes, wait for the Lord. Waiting for the Lord means continuing to take steps of faith with the Lord.

I believe with my whole heart we're going to see the greatest revival in the history

of the world in our generation. I believe it. I believe it. And if we don't, I'm going to live as though we are. That's just where I'm at because if God finds me doing the things that He's called me to do and he doesn't give us, that's totally fine with me. That's God's call. But I want to live in such a way that if God brought revival to our nation, we would be ready to disciple people with the word of God. We'd be ready to unleash the church. We'd be ready to change what we're doing, all for the glory of Jesus Christ. Would you go all in with Him to see that and tell people, "Hey, you're not on this team." I can tell you I know what's coming because I've read my Bible. God's goodness is going to take place on this planet, and if you're in Christ, you're going to experience it. And if you're not, you're going to see it, but you're not going to experience it because God's goodness, while it's for all people, it's only for those who are willing to repent and come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ for who He is.

And isn't this what God's done throughout everything? I mean, isn't this how he lives? I mean, think about this. A lot of Bible scholars will say that Sanballat and Tobiah were Yahweh. I mean guys that believed in Yahweh. I mean Jews that were like, this is our God. But over time... And the reason they say that is because their kids' names had Hebrew names. So here's a couple of guys that started with God. Then the culture changed. Then they conceded and went with the culture. Then they tried to combine the culture with the gospel. And then, when push came to shove, what did they choose? They chose the culture.

The culture and Christ do not mix. You can't have a little bit of the world and mix it with a little bit of Christ. It doesn't mix. You can have Christ and you can reject the

world's system or you're really part of the world. Where are you? There's not a lot of people preaching that today. There's a lot of people preaching, "Well, that's the way the culture is. And we want to build a church so the culture feels comfortable in our church and we want them to come, and we want our friends to feel welcome here and we want them to come back." I want all your friends to feel welcome here because Jesus Christ will welcome anybody, but I don't want one sinner here to sit here in their sin and feel comfortable in their sin, knowing they've rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and are facing an eternal hell. I want you to feel such massive weight from the glory of God that when I expose the cross and Jesus Christ who died for you, who was buried for you, who rose for you, that will take all that guilt and condemnation away if you'll turn away from the world and turn away from your sin and turn to Christ so you can experience his glory. That's the message I'm giving you. Come to Christ.

And isn't this what Jesus did? Didn't He follow these steps? Didn't He willingly leave the comfortable of heaven behind and become a man and come to this earth and continue to take steps of faith all the way to the cross and to the grave and up and out of it? Didn't Jesus familiarize himself with what was broken? Oh, he saw it. He's God. He saw it, but He became incarnate flesh so He could familiarize himself with what was broken and spent 30 years on the earth before he started telling people what they needed to do. And didn't Jesus show people the depth of their depravity, their failure, their calamity, misfortune, humiliation, and what they must change and how God would help if they did? And didn't He tell his enemies that they were unrepentant, that they would see God's blessings, but they would never experience them?

I mean, isn't this what our savior does? Isn't this who our Lord is? Why would He expect any less from us? You want to get started with the Lord, this is how you get started with the Lord. He wants to do a great work in and through you. He wants to do a great work in and through His church. He wants us to be part of one of the greatest generations in the history of the church. He isn't telling you to go look back. He's telling you to go forward to the kingdom of God. He's saying your best days are ahead. If you're aware of what He's doing in your life and you're willing to let Jesus Christ be the Lord of your life, He will change you. And when He does, friends, it doesn't matter so much what your vocation is, but you will steward all your influence first and foremost to say, "I want Jesus to get my best. I want Him to get my best time. I want Him to get my best resources. I want Him to get my best influence. I want to make sure Jesus, that your church is established in such a way that you're able to work in and through us in a way that changes the culture."

And by the way, Nehemiah is just speaking the Word of God. God's the one doing the work in all the people, and He's the one that's going to complete the wall. And what had been broken down for over a hundred plus years is going to be fixed in about 52 days. Friends, never look at our world and say, "It's too broken. It'll never change. Have you watched the news? No, I have not because it makes me mad. But Jesus Christ gives me hope. And I'm hopeful. There's no place I'd rather preach than brave. There's no place I'd rather be on a Sunday than brave. There's no place I'd rather be on first Tuesday than brave. There's no group of people I'd rather be around. Some of the finest people in all of Colorado attend brave. I believe that with my whole

heart. And God's gift, He has. I mean that.

And I love you, and this is where I'm called to be. And I want to do everything I can to help steward the resources God's given me to help you be the best that you can be for the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, my goal would be someday when we stand in His presence, for those of us who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, He tap us all on the shoulder and we turn around and He show us millions if not billions of people that are in the kingdom because of what God was able to do through us. And He would show us video after video, after video, after video of lives that were changed for the culture, for the glory of God, not because of us being great people, and not because of us being on a performance plan, but because of what Jesus Christ did in and through us. I want to be a part of that, and I know you do too. Amen? Amen.

Would you stand with me? Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we just come before you in humility. If there's anybody here who's never trusted Jesus Christ and you've been playing games and you realize Jesus is Lord, and He's put that weight of sin on you, here's how you can pray. Lord Jesus, I turn from my sin. I turn from what I'm doing. I'm coming to you. I need full forgiveness. Thank you for dying on the cross for me and being raised from the dead. I need your life in me now.

And for those of you that know the Lord, what's your next step? What's He showing you? What's He asking you to trust Him with? I know in front of all of our campuses today, we're going to have elders and pastors and people here to pray with

you if you'd like that. You can pray where you're at. But Lord, do a work here today. Help us all not leave here the same. Help us be ready to take next steps because we believe that you're the God who is the covenant keeping, promise keeping God the same God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the same God we serve today. Lord, do a work in our hearts. We trust you to move in and through us to change our city, nation, and world for the glory of Jesus Christ. And it's in your name we pray. Amen and Amen. Can we give God praise for who he is?