



# **Message Transcript**

## **House Rules**

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Our Father in heaven, we just thank you so much for who you are. Thank you for the privilege of gathering as your saints to worship your name, because you and you alone deserve our praise. Lord, we are so desperate for you. We are so dependent upon you. Lord, remind us today of all that you are and all that you're trying to accomplish in and through us.

Lord, let us honor your holiness and your sovereignty and your goodness and your truth in everything that you are. Lord, we ask special divine favor this week on the elections that are taking place across our state. God, would you elect those who are godly and righteous and good Lord, to serve on our behalf for this nation and this state and the cities that we live in? God, we just ask your favor to go before us. Lord, I pray specific favor on those who are running for office, who are here in our church, who love you and are only doing this to honor you.

Lord, be favorable to all of them. And, Lord, we come before you now because we're ready to hear your living word. And we believe as a people that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you are speaking. So our prayer this morning is speak, Lord, for we are ready to hear. And so for now, for all those who are here who desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to you, who will

believe what he says and who will, by faith, put into practice what he shows you.

Will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen. Amen.

Every house has family rules in your home. You can even purchase them at hobby lobby or somewhere else, and they'll read something like this. If you opened it, close it.

If you unlocked it, lock it. If you moved it, put it back. If you turned it on, turn it off. If it doesn't concern you, don't mess with it, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And then there's other rules that we have in our house, like, don't chew food in that room, don't eat over there, don't put your feet on that.

You know, be in the house by this time, go to bed by. We have all these rules that really make up the culture of what our individual family is to look like and whether they're specific or whether they're inherent. All of us that live in that family understand what those rules are. Do you know that God, in his word, gives rules for his house and what his house needs to be? And all throughout the Old and the New Testament, it's replete with instructions for his kingdom's citizens, covenant, children, of his for how they're to live both inside and outside the house.

And just because you have house rules when you escape the house and get out of the house, that those things change. And the same is true for God in his house. The things that he instructs us in, the things that he wants us to do, are things that he desires us to live, not only here, but on the outside. And it's really interesting because as we've been studying the book of Nehemiah, we've seen the favor of God over the entire nation of Israel. Because one man heard the voice of God.

Nehemiah left his post, went to Jerusalem, built a team, built a wall, established the population. And now, for the first time in 130 years, rather than being a reproach to all the other nations, they're actually walking with the Lord. The question becomes, how can you see that endure? How can you have enduring community? How can you have an enduring legacy?

How can you continue to experience God among you as a people? How is it after you come to Christ, you can continue to see God work in your life? How is it as a church, that when we're formed as his citizens in a body of Christ, how do we see God's work continue? Because God's not only concerned with the here and now, he's

concerned with the legacy that we're gonna leave, the lasting legacy. And to do that, God's given us house rules, rules for his house that he tells us individually, this is how I want you to live.

Collectively, this is how you should live. And if we put those things into practice, then we can experience the blessing and the favor of God. So if you ever wanted to know about what are his house rules, how can we see an enduring legacy? How can I see it pour out my life and my family's life, and in the next generation's life. I believe God has a word for you.

Today we're going to talk about four rules that God has in his house that if you'll put into practice, and we'll collectively put into practice, we can not only see the favor of God right now, we can continue to see it in the next generation. And to do that, this morning, I want to invite you to Nehemiah chapter 13. Nehemiah, chapter 13, the last chapter in the book of Nehemiah. And we're going to highlight those four rules that God has for us, that we can live so that we can become the children of God that he desires us to be. And let me give you the first rule as we get started.

The first house rule is to separate yourself from ungodly and factious people as an individual and as a group of people, as his church, as his covenant children.

Separate yourself from ungodly and factious people. Hear the word of the Lord. It says on that day. Well, what's that day?

That's the day that they dedicated the wall. That's the day they had massive celebration. That's the day they had two choirs standing on the wall celebrating God, telling God that he was worthy, thanking God for all that he had done. On that day, they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And there was found written in it that no ammonite or moabite should ever enter the assembly of God.

And here's why. Because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. So when they heard the law, they excluded all foreigners from. You remember when Israel went up, the ammonites and the Moabites, they didn't meet him with bread and water when they left Egypt and they were going into the promised land.

Instead of doing that, the king of Balaam hired, or the king of Moab hired Balaam to be a prophet, to speak ill over Israel. He was going to pay him a lot of money if he cursed Israel. Now, Balaam was a truth telling prophet, but he was a wicked prophet. Now, keep in mind, Balaam did tell him, I can only say what God tells me to say. So several different times, he spent time before the Lord, and the Lord said, here's what you're going to say.

And every time Balaam opened his mouth, he blessed Israel. So much so that the king of Moab is like, we're not paying you. We paid you to curse him. And you didn't curse him, you're not getting paid. So he never got paid.

But after he blessed Israel, a period of times, Balaam went back and said, listen, I can only say what God tells me to say. That's what I'm called to do. But I will tell you this. If you can get Israel to go after prostitutes and sexual immorality, and you get them to worship other gods, you can take them. And so he showed their nation what to do, and Israel plunged into immorality.

So he was a wicked prophet, and that the reason he did that is so he could get

paid. And so what is said here, when these people realize after 130 years they haven't had the favor of God, they start reading in the law of Moses. Here's what happened. These people did not love God. These people did not want what God wanted.

They wanted you all separate from them so that you can be a covenant community that only honors God. So they made sure that the only people in the temple were what? Jews. Why? Because they didn't want anybody else that was serving foreign gods there.

What's the principle? Separate yourself from people that don't love the Lord Jesus Christ. Who's the church for? The church is welcomes anybody who's willing to repent and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God who died on the cross for you who rose from the dead. And if you'll turn from your sin and turn to Christ, welcome.

Who's it not for? Those that want to be here just to cause problems and worship your own God, right? And that's what he was doing. He was separating. He was saying, you can't come in.



This is not for you. This is only for people that want to worship the true and living God. And then we see it get really personal here in verse four, it says now, prior to this, Eliashab, the priest who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God. Now who's Eliashab? He's the high priest.

He's appointed over all the worship. He's the man of God that's going to lead God's people so that they all worship God. That's his job. That's his only responsibility is to make sure that the people are being ministered to on behalf of God. And he's ministering God to them.

That's his job. But notice what it says about him being related to Tobiah. Do you remember Tobiah? Tobiah was the one back in chapter four and other chapters. But we'll just look at chapter four, four, three.

Tobiah, the ammonite was near him and he said, even what they are building, if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down. Who was Tobiah? He was

a name caller. He hated Israel. He taunted Israel.

Even when Israel was doing what God wanted, he was like, oh, that thing's gonna fall down if a fox jumped on that. And we see at the end of verse seven that when he saw what they were doing and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very, very angry. He got angry when God's will was being done. He taunted the people of God and got angry when God was working through those people. Now here's what's interesting, he's related to the high priest.

He's related to the high priest. And because he's related to the high priest by marriage, the priest makes some bad decisions. Notice what happens. He had prepared a large room for him. That's what the high priest did for Tobiah.

Where formerly they had put grain offerings in frankincense, the utensils and the tithes of grain, wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priest. So here's what's going on. The high priest who is responsible for the worship of God, making sure that all the sacrifices, making sure all the worship, making sure everything takes place, making sure the

Levites are set up to lead worship. Instead of doing that because he's related to Tobiah via marriage, the guy that taunted them, the guy that was against them, instead of having all the things they needed to do, worship, he cleared all that out so Tobiah could have his own room in the house of God. Do you think God was pleased with that?

Heck no. So why didn't Nehemiah do anything about it? Here's why. Verse six. But during all this time, I was not in Jerusalem.

For in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes, king of Babylon, I had gone to see the king. So there's some period of time after Nehemiah establishes the wall and they do this, that he goes back to see the king and let him know, hey, thanks for letting me come. Here's what's been going on. We don't know how long he was gone, but while he was gone, instead of doing the worship of God, they cleared out what was needed to do the worship of God and gave that room to Tobiah, the guy that had mocked Nehemiah the entire time they were setting up the wall. But notice this.

After some time, however, I asked leave from the king and I came to Jerusalem

and learned about the evil. He calls it evil. It is evil when you have non covenant children living in the house of God that have no desire to repent. When I saw the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house, our God, it was very displeasing to me. Now that's biblical talk, for I was not happy about anything I was seeing.

Now, Nehemiah is not a priest. Nehemiah is doing construction. Nehemiah is a wall builder. But what does he do? Does he call a committee?

Does he gather the elders of the land. Does he say, what should we do about this? No. Notice what he does. Notice what he does in verse eight, it was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room.

So Tobiah had set up shop. He's living in the temple of God. Nehemiah gets back, sees the one that had taunted him, sees the one who had taunted the wall, sees the one who had gotten angry. And because of that man's relationship to the high priest, he was given a room in the house of God. Friends, if somebody is not in Christ, they are out of Christ, separate from them.

You are different. Nehemiah doesn't hesitate. Nehemiah grabs all of his stuff and throws it out of the house of God. It doesn't belong here. It can't be here.

We can't have God's favor here. When people who hate God are here, he throws them out and notice what goes on next. He throws them out, and here's what we see in verse nine. Then I gave an order, and they cleansed the room. And I returned there the utensils of the house of God with the grain offerings and the frankincense.

So I cleared Tobiah out and I replaced it with everything that worship was going to need. Why? Because I was prioritizing the house of God. Because I wanted to make sure the worship of God was going on. Now, can I just share something with you about the gospel?

The gospel is so narrow. The Bible says, enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the road that leads to destruction. Narrow. Broad is the gate, and wide is the road

that leads to destruction. And many are on it.

But narrow is the gate, and small is the road that leads to life, and few find it. If you've really come to Christ, you're one of the few. It's God's grace for the few. And you realize that you've entered through the narrow gate. And now you're on this narrow path, and everybody else is on the broad road, and they're going different, and you're staying on that narrow path.

Please don't tell me that someone's saved that's not on the narrow path that hasn't entered through the narrow gate. Some false versions of the gospel that are proclaimed today in our culture say something like this. God loves you no matter what. Stay in your sin. If you just pray a prayer, if you just jump through this religious hoop, if you just give some money, if you just join the church, you're in.

Don't worry about it. Live your self centered life and one day when you die, God will take you to heaven. Because that's just a God of love. That is a lie. From the pit of hell.

Here's the gospel. You're dead because of your sin. And because of your sin, you've rebelled against God from the time you came out of your womb. You're wicked and there is nothing you can do about it. You can't be good enough to get to heaven.

You can compare yourself to all the people on the planet that tell you you're good. And in light of almighty, perfect God, you're not good. There's no one good. No, not one. And God, in his mercy and love, loved you so much that the father sent his son to be the savior of the world, the second person of the Trinity.

Jesus Christ, put on incarnate flesh, came here and fulfilled the law, did everything required of his dad, went to the cross, had the wrath of God poured out on him for one reason and one reason only. Because your sin is so despised, disgusting in the eyes of God that the precious blood of our savior was the only thing that could take it away. God raised him. Three days later, he offered life to anyone who would recognize their sinful, dead condition, repent of their sin, turn to Christ, enter through the narrow gate and stay on the narrow road. And if you're in Christ, over time, you will start to live like and grow with and look like Jesus Christ.

You are not like the world. That's the gospel. Amen.

I'm not preaching to people who are good people who are becoming better. I'm not preaching to bad people who are becoming good. I'm preaching to dead people who need to be made alive by Christ. And if you've had your sins forgiven, there's no greater thing in the entire world.

But let me tell you something. If you have had your sin forgiveness, then here's the question. Why do you look like the world? I mean, if you're truly born again, get away from those who are traveling down a different road. You should think different, look different, and act different than those who haven't.

Honestly, if you're a believer, there should be people in your life that look at you and think you're weird. They should think you're weird about the way you view sexuality, they should think you're weird about the way you view marriage. They should think you're weird about the way you view life. They should think you're weird about the way you view money. They should think you're weird that you would come to a church



service on Sunday morning and listen to God's word being open.

They should think you're weird in the way that you worship. They should think you're weird in the way that you parent. They should think you're weird in the way that you date. They should think you're weird in the way you look for a job. They should think you're weird in what you talk about and what you think about and what you look at.

That's what they should think. Because if every non believer looks at you and say, we're pretty much the same, what's different? You're not living like Christ. Amen.

And I want to tell you this, if you're truly born again, behavior and not words are what distinguish a believer. Stop deceiving yourself. Your behavior is what distinguishes you. Well, I thought it was by grace through faith and works didn't mean anything. It is by grace.

It's only by grace. It's only by grace through faith. But if you've repented and believed and received God's grace into your life, you will change your behavior over time, will change how you think, will change what you look at will change. What you do will change. Why?

Because the spirit of God is on the inside of you. And if you're one of those who are here today, which I know there are many who would say, I know I'm saved because I prayed a prayer. I know I'm saved because I did this. I know my spouse is saved because they did it. But there's zero evidence in your life of a hunger for God and a zero evidence in your life where your behavior has changed.

Here's what my plea would be to you. Examine yourself and see if you're in the faith. Please do not go into eternity and stand before the living God and say, well, I prayed some prayer and the pastor told me I was going to heaven. That won't be enough for you. What you need to do is say, I repented and I believed that Jesus Christ is the God man, the only God in the universe, and I gave my life to him and I surrendered my life to him, and I'm progressively growing in him.

That's salvation. Amen.

And if that's how you're living, you should separate from people and listen. I realize Christians can sin. Christians can sin. But if you're under the word of God, it should convict you of your sin. My wife and I were talking this week about this message before I preached it, and we were thinking about our college experience where we had come to Christ, but we were trying to figure out how to live it.

We didn't grow up in a bible church. We didn't grow up knowing the word. We didn't have any indication of what church should be or how it should be done. We were trying to live for God, and yet we were in the world some and doing all this stuff. And both of us were saying, if we had been at a church like brave and heard the word preached over us at that time, we would have sat in the service and wept, come forward and talked to an elder and said, what do I got to do to get right?

I want to do this thing because I was so hungry for God. I just didn't know how to walk with them. And it's his word. And all along he was beckoning and growing and saying, come to me, come to me, come to me. I have ways for you to live.

And that's what he's doing in your life. And if you're living in sin, he's begging you, come to me. I'll wash you, I'll forgive you, but you have to give up all rights to yourself and let me do that. And if you say, I don't want that, what you're saying is I'm not distinctly christian, and you need to be aware that's true of you. And I'm pleading with you this morning to give your life to Christ.

And that's not just an Old Testament concept to separate yourself from ungodly and factious people. It's a New Testament concept. I mean, it's not just the Tobiahs and the sanballatz and the people like that that are factious. It's today, when you're around people that claim that they're Christians, but they don't live like Christians. Get away from them.

The apostle Paul tells us in one corinthians chapter five, starting in verse eleven, when he was talking about an immoral son that was engaging in immorality with his mom, he said, but I actually wrote to you not to associate with any so called brother. If, in other words, Paul is going to say, if somebody calls themselves a believer, a brother or sister in Christ, and they act like this, and I'm about to tell you, don't eat with even a

person like that. So who shouldn't I eat with if he's an immoral person? Somebody calls themselves a Christian and they're sexually immoral and they're unrepentant and they're into porn or they're into, you know, prostitution or they're into their affairs and they're into all this stuff. But I'm a Christian.

Don't hang out with people like that. Get away from them like yesterday or a covetous person. Somebody's greedy. Oh, I'm a Christian. But everything in their life is greedy.

They're going after money and material possessions for themselves. Get away from such a person or an idolater. Somebody that worships someone other than Jesus, you say? Well, they say they're a Christian. That's the only place they go to worship.

No, but their whole life is about the worship of materialism or things or sports or whatever else their God is made up of. Get away from people like that. Or reviler, somebody that causes problems, a slanderer, somebody that stirs up controversy and division, but they call themselves a believer. Get away from them. Or a drunkard.

The Bible doesn't give a case for abstinence, but somebody who gives themselves to drink on a daily basis, somebody gives themselves to drink on a weekly basis and is intoxicated. Stay away from them no matter what they call themselves, or a swindler. Somebody's like a wolf. Somebody's causing problems. Says this not to even eat with such a one.

And we're talking about people that call themselves Christians because notice what Paul says next. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church, but those who are outside? God judges them. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

What's he saying? When you hang out with people who say they're Christian, but they don't act christian, don't even eat with them. Don't go to Starbucks with them, don't have them over to your house. Don't fellowship with them. Don't go on vacation together with them.

Get away from them. Why? Because if they're truly a believer, that separation will bring repentance into their life through the kindness of the Lord. And if they're not, they will be mad at you and they'll walk away. Because what?

Because they've never been a believer. Like, we don't talk about this in church. Here's what we say. Church is for everybody. Church is for everybody.

Church is for everybody. One of the reasons we don't have the power of God in our churches is because church is for believers and for those who would come in to hear the gospel so they can repent and become believers. That's who we're for. If you're here today, and you never trusted Christ. Welcome.

You're welcome here. I'm calling on you, and I'm pleading with you to repent and give your life to Jesus Christ. Nothing greater you could ever do. Not asking you to join our church, not asking for your money. Not asking for you to profess your faith.

Write your name down. I'm asking you in your heart of hearts right now. To repent and say, I'm not in Christ. I need to be in Christ. Because if I met Christ, I'd hear the words, depart from me, you worker of iniquity.

I never knew you. And if you're in Christ, what are you doing hanging out on a regular basis with those who aren't? The only reason you should hang out with non believers. Is to share the gospel. Your closest personal friendships should be, 100% of the time, believers that are exhorting you, admonishing you, encouraging you to continue to walk in the Lord.

Because you need it, and I need it. But if you call yourself a Christian, but you hang out with those that don't act like one, it's bad for your soul, and it's bad for them. Because we learn that sometimes when people leave, not just, like leave a church and go to another church, sometimes when they leave Christ and leave the church altogether. One, John 219 tells us why they went out from us, but they were really not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have remained with us.

But they went out so that it would be shown that they are really not of us. I don't



know how many people come up and tell me about their spouse that's a Christian, or their daughter that's a Christian, or their son that's a Christian, or their dad's a Christian. But then they go and make excuses for why they've never acted christianly. And as I'm listening, everything in me wants to scream. What makes them a Christian?

The fact they prayed a prayer. Where do you find that in the Bible? The fact they asked Jesus into their heart. Where do you find that in the Bible? The evidence that they've asked Jesus in their heart, the evidence that they prayed a prayer.

Is that the Holy Spirit came in. And they've been transformed. And if there's no transformation over time, there is no salvation. There is no justification. And you are still under the wrath of God.

So separate yourself from people that are under the wrath of God. Except for the fact of being with them. To live the gospel in front of them. And just share with them that they need to repent and believe in Jesus. That's what it says.

It's good for your soul and it's good for them. And it's hard for me because I'm watching what's going on in the news and specifically concerned about things that I see in the church with pastors that fall from grace who have been untruthful about their past. And God doesn't call pastors to be perfect in their past, but they should be honest about their past. They should be forgiven from their past. They should be growing from their past.

And I'm watching some of these things come out, and it just breaks my heart. You can look them up in the news. I'm not gonna talk about it. But I look at it and I'm like, God, you're cleaning your house first. Peter 4:17 says, it's time for judgment to begin at the house of God.

And if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? You watch pastors fall. That's the grace of God. Getting them ready for the judgment that's to come. You haven't dealt with this sin.

You haven't dealt with what you've done. You haven't repented. You haven't gotten right. You haven't been restored. I love you enough to take you out of ministry

so that you can be right on Judgment Day.

Amen.

God wants to bless his church, but in order to bless his church, we got to live holy. In order to bless his church, we got to live separate. So separate yourselves from the ungodly and the factious people unless you're sharing the gospel. And for sure, separate yourself from people who call themselves christians and don't act like them. They're not acting like.

Well, they say they. What are they acting like? What's their behavior like? Well, they say they're a Christian, but they're in porn every single day. Get away from them.

Tell them to repent. Tell them to get right with Jesus. Tell them you don't want to hang out with them because you don't want to become like them. And tell them the grace of God is greater than their sin. If they'd ever get to a place, they'd want it.

And stop being so stubborn. Point one.

You know, Jesus called himself a good shepherd, and he talked about what a bad shepherd was. When the wolf comes, the bad shepherd leaves because he only sheep was there. Because he got hired. He was a hireling. Jesus said, I'm a good shepherd.

I'll stay there. A good shepherd protects the sheep. When a sheep falls in a dish, a good shepherd picks him up. A good shepherd, when it sees a sheep that's sick, quarantines the sheep so it doesn't get the other sheep sick. A good shepherd, when it sees a wolf, takes it behind the barn and kills it without spooking the sheep so that the sheep don't get killed by the wolf.

Friends, to be in a position like this, you got to care about sheep. To be in God's church, you got to care about him, and you got to care about his people, and you got to care about him enough that you would separate from those who are ungodly and

factions. Amen. Second rule of the house is this. Serve with generosity and zeal.

Serve with generosity and zeal. Notice verse ten. I also discovered, after he had discovered that Tobiah had been there, I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them. So that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field. So not only had Tobias set up what he did, so he didn't have the utensils for worship, they weren't collecting the tithe.

And so all the priests and the Levites that would have been ministering on behalf of God couldn't minister anymore because they didn't have the resources and because they had to provide for their family. Guess what they did? They worked in an agricultural job so they could make enough money to provide for their family. But by doing that, the house of God was dying because those who have been called to serve for God weren't there anymore. And Nehemiah said, this is a problem.

This is a huge problem because we need to make sure if we're going to be what we need to be, that the house of God is the first thing that we establish, that the presence and the power and the purity of God is what's established. You want to see

a nation change? Make sure the house of God is established, make sure he's primary and he's first. So what does he do in verse eleven? He doesn't stand passively, he said.

So I reprimanded the officials and said, why is the house of God forsaken? Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts. Now, you remember back in chapter ten and verse 39 when they were establishing everything they were saying, God will do anything you want us to do. And at the end of verse 39 and chapter ten, thus we will not neglect the house of our God. Lip service doesn't impress the Lord.

Actions do. They said they were going to give. They said they were going to tithe. They said they were going to be all about the house. Guess what they forgot to do?

To give to tithe and to be all about the house. So Nehemiah reprimanded them. Said, what is the house of God doing like this? Why is the house of God forsaken? Then notice verse twelve.

All. That's everybody. All. Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses. In charge of the storehouses, I appointed Shelemaiah the priest, Zadok the scribe.

Padaiah of the Levites. And in addition to them, Hanan, the son of Zakir, the son of Mataniah. Why did he appoint them? Here's why. For they were considered reliable.

And it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen. Let's give you a word on this New Testament. Same thing entrusted to faithful men who can do it. Why did he pick this scribe? Why did he pick this priest?

Why did he pick this Levite? Because they had proven themselves faithful. Over time. These guys will take care of the house of God. They care more about the house of God than they care about themselves.

So as the tithe was restored. So that the priests and the Levites could minister. These men were responsible for the distribution. And then what do we see? We see prayer.

I love this. The book starts with Nehemiah praying. When he gets the word about the Jews and all the distress they were in. He breaks down, he prays, he laments, he fasts, he seeks the Lord. He's crying out to God.

What's he still doing? In verse 14 of chapter 13, notice this. He's praying. Remember me for this, o my God. And do not blot out my loyal deeds.

Which I have performed for the house of my God and its services. And what's that tell you? It tells you you don't have to be a priest. It tells you you don't have to be a pastor. You don't have to be a scribe.

To support the house of God. What's he praying for? God. In my vocation and in



my calling. Let me do everything I can to support the work of God.

Where's the work of God today? It's his church. The church is his covenant.

People, what can you do? Everything in your power to ensure that the work of God is going on.

And what's the work of God? He prescribes how worship should be done. The preaching of the word. How worship should be done, how evangelism should be done, how prayers should be done, how service should be done. I mean, can you just pause for a minute and imagine what would it be like if there wasn't a church, like brave, and there's other churches, like brave that do the right things?

What if you couldn't go to a place and you couldn't hear the word of God, and you couldn't worship in community, and you couldn't be in fellowship with other brothers and sisters, and you couldn't evangelize the law, and you couldn't pray and seek God together? What would your life be like? I know what mine would be like. I know from my own experience I cannot walk with God by myself. I know from my own experience I don't want to be in a house of God where the word of God's not being preached.

I don't want to be in the house of God where Jesus is not being elevated in worship. I don't want to be in a house of God where there's no care for the lost. I don't want to be a house of God that doesn't pray. And prayer is an afternoon thought rather than our first response.

I don't want to be in a house of God where nobody cares about each other. I don't want to be in a house of God where people are just doing whatever they want. I want to be in a house of God where people prioritize Jesus and each other because it's what builds my faith. And this is what Nehemiah was saying. He goes, we need more houses like this.

More and more and more, not fewer and fewer and fewer. Amen. And here's my question. When I read all this, I'm like, where are the men? I mean, why is it most young men do not pursue a ministry career?

I mean, there's several reasons for this. I mean, some of the reasons are that we

devalue the role of spiritual leaders in our culture. Like, if you can't do anything else, if you tried it all, sports didn't work out, business world didn't work out, education didn't work, nothing else worked out. Maybe you should go into the ministry. They take every leftover there.

Could it be that the most important role on this side of heaven is proclaiming the word of God to his people so that they can hear it and respond the way God wants? Could it be that we have biblically illiterate pastors and morally depraved people in the pulpit? That doesn't draw the right kind of person to come and do the work. Could it be that the people of God don't honor their pastors and their spiritual leaders the way that they should? Now, when I say this, I'm not talking about me.

I'm not talking about me, Jeff. I'm talking about pastor as the role I'm see through. I'm broken. I'm just like you in every single way. I'm talking about honoring the role of the pastor, speaking good about your pastor, submitting to the leadership in your church, honoring the church, not listening to people that gossip about the church and talk bad about the church.

When somebody calls themselves a Christian and talks bad about a pastor or another church, you should run away from them as fast as you possibly can. They should look at you and be like, where did they go? Not like, I'm not listening to you, but I'm getting away from you because God loves his church. And I'm not talking about brave church. I'm talking about the church.

I'm talking about the church of Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean pastors are above the law. That's not what I'm saying. Pastors should have accountability in their life. If a pastor is in sin, he should be rebuked for his sin.

All those different things. I'm talking about the way that we talk down about church and the way that we put it down and the way we don't value the church the way Jesus Christ does. Because in the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ, the church is the most valuable institution on the planet, and he chose you to be a part of it. Amen.  
Amen.

That's worth praise to our Lord.

And I'm pleased. Here in our church, we have a ton of young men, some that have gone through our internship, some that are sitting there. I'm telling you, if you have the call of God on your life, there's no more noble thing that you can do than to proclaim God's word to his people. There's nothing more noble. Now, you may not be recognized in this life, and that doesn't matter.

What matters is, is that you're faithful with whatever God calls you to do. Because we need more and more and more and more godly men to rise up and proclaim his word. More and more godly men that aren't called to do that, but want to support the men that are called to do that, more and more godly families that are called to support the ongoing work of God, because we truly believe that. So goes the church. So goes our world.

If you want to see change, let change start here in the house of God. Let change start here with us. See, the question becomes, how will you contribute to make sure that God gets his work done? What does it look like for you to contribute financially or with your time or with your gifting? Serve generously and with zeal.

Nehemiah is zealous. He's rebuked leaders, he's reprimanded them. It's going to get even more intense here in just a minute. Let me give you the third rule for the house, for you and for us. Honor God's law with clarity and specificity.

Honor God's law with clarity and specificity. By that I mean honor what God has established. Be clear on what he's established and then specifically obey it. Notice what he says in verse 15. In those days, I saw in Judah some, that's not everybody in Judah, there's some who were treading wine presses on the Sabbath and bringing in sacks of grain and loading them on donkeys, as well as wines, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads.

And they brought them into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I admonished them on the day they sold food. Why? Because they were called in the ten Commandments to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. There was one day, a week that they were prescribed as the nation of Israel to set aside that entire day to not do business, but to give God all the glory.

Now, that's the only commandment in the New Testament that's not specifically repeated. Because in the New Testament we're living in a Sabbath rest. But if one day was enough in the Old Testament, I think in the New Testament we should be able to set aside a day for the Lord too. And yet, haven't you noticed in our culture, over time, I don't have time to give God a whole day. Friends, God created the entire universe out of nothing.

In six literal days. He rested on the 7th, not because he was tired, but he was providing an example of what to do. Go hard six days, then give me a day. Come back and pause before me. Give me worship, give me honor, give me praise.

Spend time with family, refresh yourself, be attentive to all that I'm doing. Let me be God in your life. And I'll just say this. If you're too busy to give God one day a week in your life, let me tell you something, you're too busy. Your priorities are wrong.

It's that simple. Now, I'm not talking about being lazy. For six days and coasting into the Sabbath work is noble. Work hard. Give him six days.

Give him a great six days. But give him one day a week where you just get him. You say, well, my job doesn't permit me to do. Don't be legalistic about it. Then pick two days and put them together.

Two half days. I mean, pick some way where you know God, you get all my glory, honor and allegiance. Sunday would be a great day for y'all. You're here already given half a day. Spend the rest of the day honoring him.

Refresh, reflect, honor one another, honor your families. God gave you this day for him. So he notices that they're starting to sell on the Sabbath. He doesn't like it. He says in verse 16, also the men of tyre who were living there, who imported fish and all kinds of merchandise and sold them to the sons of Judah on the Sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

So what's he going to do? He said, then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, what is this evil thing you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? Now, we



don't talk like that in church. When people sin, we're like, oh, they sin. Everybody sins.

What does Nehemiah call it? An evil thing you're doing?

Anytime we break the law, it's an evil thing we're doing. When we fall short and we're immoral, you're doing evil. When we slander somebody, we're doing evil. When we listen to somebody gossip, we're doing evil. When we're greedy, we're doing evil.

We don't call things specifically. We say, oh, I struggle with that. You're not struggling with it. You're doing evil, and you need to repent of that. And you need Jesus to come into your life and heal that.

That's what he's talking about. So he notices that they're doing evil. God's command says, don't sell or buy on the Sabbath. They're buying and selling on the Sabbath. He reprimands all of them and then notice verse 18.

Love this verse. Did not your fathers do the same so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble. You are adding to the wrath of God on Israel by profaning the Sabbath. For 130 years we've been living in drudgery. It's treacherous what's going on.

And the reason is, is that your dads and your granddads and their dads, they didn't keep the law. And now that God's established and shown you his favor. Why is it you're not keeping the law? If we don't keep the law, we can't expect God to do any more for us than what he did for them. Hasn't 130 years of awfulness been enough for you?

Start obeying the law now. Here's the good news. Here's the good news. Obedience to God is not legalistic. It's not a list that you write down.

I gotta get better at that. I gotta heal my anger problem. I gotta heal my drunkenness. I gotta heal my sexual immorality. I gotta.

Oh, I gotta work. I got so much to do this week. That's not it. Because of God's love for you. If you're a Christian, you'll want to do what God wants you to do.

It'll be him working out his grace in and through you to do that. It'll be you repenting and saying, I can't do this, but I know in Christ I can. Jesus said in John 15, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments. It's my love that'll work through you. He says, anyone who loves me keeps my word, and my father and I will come to him and make our home with him.

But anyone who does not love me does not keep my word. I mean, the simple litmus test of knowing, do you love God? Is do you want to be obedient to his commands? Do you want to keep his word? Do you have a desire to keep his word?

Do you want to grow in his word? And when you fall short of it, do you find yourself confessing and repenting with his word? Friends, we've drifted so far as a church culture, in our culture, from God's commands and his desires. We're salt and light. We're the preservative of our nation.

We are the light in the darkness. But if we don't live biblically true lives and morally pure lives, the power, presence of God cannot work through us. We need to do that. Nehemiah goes on. In verse 19, it said, it came about just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem.

Before the Sabbath. I commanded that the doors be shut and that they should not open them until after the Sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants on the gates so that no load would enter on the Sabbath day. Nehemiah is taking great measures to honor this command. Once or twice, the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.

So some people are waiting. Maybe he won't shut the gate. Maybe we can get through. We're trying to skim on this law. It's no big deal.

So what does Nehemiah do then? I warned them and I said to them, why do you

spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you.

That doesn't sound christian. Yes, it does.

Yes, it does. Yes, it does. We are called to stand firm, not back down. Do you understand? That's what Nehemiah was doing.

So from that time on, they did not come on the Sabbath. Why? Because he threatened them. You will not break God's law. If you do, there will be consequences.

Parents, if your kids break the law, there should be consequences. If there's no consequences, they don't learn about a God that has consequences. Amen. And we live in a culture where you got to have your kids be your best friend. Let them be your best friend when they're 25.

They're not your best friend. Let them keep the laws of God. Let them walk in the truth. Then he commands the Levites in verse 22, that they should purify themselves. It's not enough just to keep the law, but be cleansed by the blood and

come as gatekeepers to sanctify the Sabbath day.

For this also, remember me, o my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of your loving kindness. What's he doing? Oh, he's praying again. Lord, remember what I'm doing. Have compassion on me.

I'm not perfect, but I am trying to keep your law. And I'm dogmatic that your people will keep your laws. I'm not afraid to tell them when they're wrong. I'm not afraid to point out the truth, even if it hurts their tender little feelings. I don't care, because I care more about you than I do about people being happy, because I want them to walk in the truth.

Friends, that's what God calls us to do. If you truly love the Lord, there will be a desire and a hunger to take steps of faith with him. If you don't love the Lord, there won't be. And the only way you can love the Lord is to believe the gospel, to believe that it has nothing to do with you. It's interesting to me, and this is the thought I had right here as I'm preaching.

You know, it's interesting how many funerals I've been to and how many funerals I've officiated, and yet I read through the Bible, and those on the broad road are many. And those on the small road are few. And yet at every funeral I've been at, everybody that I've talked to has gone to heaven, and they're not. They're not. It should be sobering.

Very few of the funerals you go to have people that are celebrating in heaven. That should be sobering. It should be sobering to you personally, sobering to you about your family, sobering to you about your friends. It should be ultimately sobering. Now, the reason we say that is so we can feel good and go eat fried chicken afterwards and have a celebration.

Oh, they're in heaven. I know they're in a better place. Now. Unless that person repented and believed in Jesus and was walking in faith, they're not in heaven. They're in hell, and there's a chasm and they'll never cross it.

And they're cursing God from their grave forever, making them. That's reality. So that's why he's saying, here, separate yourself from people like that. Preach the gospel to people like that. Honor God's law in your life with such clarity and speak specificity that when you come short, you say, God, I'm guilty.

Help me, God. I need your grace. That's rule three for the family. Let me give you rule four.

Rule four for seeing enduring relationships, community, legacy, is prioritize marriage in the family. Prioritize marriage in the family. Now, this point is so near and dear to my heart. I'm going to do a whole series on it starting in July. We got a couple weeks.

We're doing something different, but I think July 14, we're kicking off a marriage and family series. I want to tell you why. You want to be here for that. If you're married, you want to be here for that. If you're single, you want to be here for that.



If you're confused about gender, you want to be here for that. If you're a young kid, you want to be here for that. If you're divorced, you want to be here for that. If you're married and you don't want to be married, you want to be here for that. I'm going to talk to you about if you never desire to be married, we're going to talk about that.

Why? Because God started with a family in the garden. He said, it's not good for man to be alone. So God designed gender, and gender is what creates marriage. And the first commandment in the Bible is, be fruitful and multiply.

And the reason for that is marriage is what produces offspring, and offspring are the next generations of disciples. So God gives specific instructions on how we are to make the family work. And unless you're one of the super, super, super small percentage of our population I've talked to that have no sexual desire, in which case you should praise God that you have greater time and capacity to serve him, then you should know everything God designed you for in your family.

You want to be here for that series. You want to tell all your friends to be here for that series. I'm going to not only be prophetic, I'm going to walk alongside of you, because I know there's a ton of pain when it comes to this because it's the attack on the family that Satan is trying to do. So notice this in verse 23. In those days, I also saw that Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab, so they married different races of people.

Now, when I'm talking race, I'm not talking skin color, because we know from God's word there's only one race. That's the human race. When I'm talking interracial, I'm talking non covenant children. If you're a believer and the person you're engaged to is a believer, you can be the darkest skinned individual and they can be the lightest skinned individual. And if you love Jesus, praise God, get married.

That's a beautiful thing. But. But if you're even thinking about dating someone who's not a believer and you're a believer, you're in sin. Run. Flee.

Get out. Cause why? Cause you're not going the same place. They're on their way to hell, and you're on their way. You're on your way to heaven.

And if you unite with a person like that, you will have a living hell on this place. So that's what he's saying. Why? Because notice verse 24. And as for their children have spoken the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people.

What was that saying? Well, when you intermarry, kids always choose the lowest common denominator. Well, when we get married, I'll be a Christian, and you know she's not gonna be. Or I'll be a Christian. He's not gonna be, but we'll work it out.

No, your kids. You will tithe your kids to hell when you do that. Because if daddy doesn't go to church, kids don't want to go to church. Mama doesn't go to church. Kids don't want to go to church.

They will follow the lowest common denominator, and they will pick on the one that wants to honor the Lord. Just so I'm being clear here today, listen, listen, listen. If you're even thinking about dating somebody or you're dating somebody and you're like,

is he talking to me? Break up with them like now and tell them until you repent and trust Jesus, I'm not even talking to you again. That's how clear I'm being.

And I know some of you, you're looking at me, oh, yeah, Pastor Jeff, whatever. And you don't know. He's making steps. So she's growing. She's.

I'm telling you, I'm saving you from a living hell. Now, listen, because it gets more intense.

I'm just getting warmed up. I'm out of time and I'm just getting warmed up. That's why I'm doing a whole series on this. Notice what he said. This might be one of my favorite verses in the Old Testament.

Just listen to it. It doesn't even sound Christian. So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair and made them swear by God, you shall not give your daughters to the sons, nor take their daughters for your

sons or for yourselves. Let me read it again because you didn't hear it. So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair and made them swear by God you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

So what did Nehemiah do? He grabbed the men by the face and he pulled out their beard and he said, what are you doing? Do you not care about your kids? Do you not care about the next generation? Do not give your daughter to a son that's not a believer, and do not give your son to a daughter that's not a believer.

And don't you dare marry somebody that's not a believer. Men, what are you thinking? That's what he was saying. Fathers, do not let your kids date nonbelievers.

I mean, I don't understand the way young people date with no passion. I'm not talking about age here, but I'm talking about if you have no intention of getting married at some point in time, what in the world are you dating for anyway? And if you are dating to get married, man, you better not let anybody near your daughter or son unless they're a covenant child of God that's going to honor you and honor your wife

and your. My wife and me, you and your spouse, unless they're going to honor you and do it God's way. You don't even let them anywhere near your kids.

And not just for the sake of your kid to have a blessed life, but your grandkids to have a blessed life. Dads, it's your responsibility. And most dads sit back and be like, well, it's not a big thing, you know? I mean, there's dating. It's just prom.

It's just this. Do you know what goes on? I knew what went on in my generation. I knew what I participated in in my generation. Cause I wasn't told this.

I'm telling you, it's worse now. It's horrid and it's despicable and it's dishonoring. And dating will not help you in your marriage. Trying this one, it didn't work. Try this one, it didn't work.

Try. It doesn't help. Wait for the right one and then be the right one and then get married. And that helps. Am I being clear?

Now, some of you read this and be like, man, he's preaching. I'm not preaching violence. I'm not asking you to go out and curse and punch people. Not. I'm saying sometimes it's important for a man to stand up and do what's right when laws are being broken.

Now, some of you don't know my dad. Most of you don't know my dad. My dad will turn 78 this year. He may be the kindest person I've ever met in my life. My dad's very gentle.

He's very level headed. He's very easygoing. He's very quick to forgive. Nothing really riles my dad up just like that. But I remember when I was in 8th grade, and we were on a trip to six flags in St.

Louis, and it was over 100 degrees, and it was before they had diagnosed people like me with ADHD and hyperactivity and all the things I probably had. And I remember being in the backseat with my friend and picking on my sister and doing all

this. And I remember we were at a gas station, and we stopped to get gas. I remember it was really hot outside, and my dad put the gas lever in and said, hey, come. Come over here.

And I follow my dad behind the gas station, and he put me up against a wall, and he said, I'm done with you acting like this. It's over. I was like, wow, he's serious. And I was done. Why?

Because sometimes it takes a man to stand up and say, we're done with this. And that's what Nehemiah was doing. Quit being a coward about the righteous things of God. I'm not asking, I'm not preaching violence. I'm not telling.

You, beat somebody up, stand firm, for Pete's sake, and call people out and tell him, I love you enough to tell you you're not living the way God wants. Honor him in every way. Right? That's what we want to be. I want to hear the truth.



You want to hear the truth. That's why we're here. He gives an example in verse 26. Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him.

And he was loved by his God and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, the foreign women caused even him to sin. Solomon started with a whole heart and ended his ministry with a half a heart. Why? Because of all the different wives he had and most of them being foreign wives.

And then, you know, you always go to the lowest common denominator. Women. If you marry a guy that doesn't love Jesus, you won't love Jesus as much. Men, if you marry a wife that doesn't love Jesus, you won't love Jesus as much. Say, well, I'm kind of stuck in a marriage that's like that right now.

Come back for our family series. We're going to talk about that. God's got a plan for you and it's good, but I'm just telling you before you enter, you need to be aware of that. Verse 27. Do we then hear about you, that you have committed this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God, by marrying foreign women?

What are you thinking? Why are you not prioritizing the family? Even the sons of Joiadah, the sons of Eliashib, the high priest, was a son in law of Sanballat the Horonite. So I drove him away from me. Sanballat and Tobiah, the ones that brought such reproach and difficulty to Israel, they're now gone.

Get away from people like that drives them away. And then what's he do? He starts to pray. Remember them, o my God. Because they have defied the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

Thus I purified them from everything foreign and appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in his task. What was he doing? He was trying to protect the people from without and within. Nehemiah was saying, I want to make sure that the house of God is established that it prioritizes the family so the next generation of disciples can go forward and be who God wants them to be. And he said, and I arranged the supply of wood at the appointed times for the first fruits.

And then he ends by saying this, the entire book, I love this. Remember me, o my God, for good Lord, remember me. Because in my generation, I wanted to be a person that lived for you. I wanted to live out your house rules and separate from ungodly, infectious people and serve with generosity and zeal and honor you with clarity and your law with specificity. And I wanted to prioritize marriage in the family because I know, Lord, if we do that, you'll change everything.

And here's the truth. The only way that can happen is in Christ. We can't make those things happen. Everybody wants to see revival. Everybody wants to see change in our culture.

We all want that. You want that? I want that. How does it happen when we prioritize the house rules of God? We let him know, you're worthy and we're dependent.

You're worthy and we're needy. We need you to do what only you can do. And, Lord, even as I'm hearing this message, or as I'm preaching this message twice today, and as I prepared all week, I'm aware of the things in my life that the Lord's still

working out and still changing. And am I willing to humble myself before him to let his spirit have his way with me? And again, it's not about a list.

Because if you leave here with guilt on your shoulders, burdened because you say, I can't do it, that's actually a good thing. If you'll take that and bring it to the cross and say, I can't do it. But, Jesus, I know you can. And, Jesus, I love you. That you loved me enough in my sin to save me.

And I love you so much that you're willing to work this out in and through me. Lord, help me keep your rules. Help me live out your house rules. I want to honor you. And, Lord, I want to be around a group of people that honor you.

And, Lord, we want to be in a community that honors you, because we want to see your passion and your presence and your purity and your power in and through our lives so that the world will know that the God we serve is real. Amen. That's the rules for us. Amen. Can we give God praise for what he gives us?

Would you stand with me, Father? We do honor you today. And, Lord, we close by singing in Christ alone. Because, Lord, it's only in you we can do these things. Lord, I'm not preaching platitudes to my flesh.

I'm preaching your truth to the spirit that lives within me, that says that I can do all things for you who give me strength. So, Lord, I just pray today for those that have felt conviction about an area of their life that realize you pointed out their need to repent. That's your love for them, Lord. Bring them to repentance today. Lord, as our pastor and elders are up front, maybe there's some that just need to come pray or bask in your presence at the altar and say, Lord, forgive me, make me new right now.

And for anybody here today who say, well, I've never even trusted Jesus. I know if I met him, I've never lived for him. He's never worked his way out in my life. And you want Christ in your life? Here's how you can simply pray.

Lord Jesus, forgive me. I'm a sinner. My desire is to turn from my sin right now and trust you as my lord and savior. Come into my life and save me, change me. You're my God.

Let me flee from the things of this world. And God, we give you all the praise and all the glory and all the honor. We thank you for your living, active word that's been speaking to us. Do your work here as we worship in Jesus name. Amen and amen.

Could we give God one more clap of praise?