



Message Transcript

Missional Momentum

Jeff Schwarzenraub

Pastor Jeff:

Father, we give you all the glory, honor and praise, and we celebrate you this morning. Lord, it's great to be in your house with your people singing worship praises to your name, seeking you in prayer and getting ready to hear your living and active word, because Lord, we as a people believe that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you are speaking. So our prayer this morning is speak, Lord, for we are ready to hear.

And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to your heart, who will believe what he tells you and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen. Amen.

When Jesus Christ rose from the dead after he had died on the cross, he gave what we call the Great Commission. He said, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you and I will be with you always to the very end of the age."

Regardless of where you go to church or regardless of where you gather, that is the mission that Jesus Christ has entrusted to all of us. And if through repentance and faith you've been born again, then God has placed you on mission. It's in your heart that you want to participate in that. It's what you were recreated for from the inside out at the time you were born again. It's the very reason why when you trusted Christ, God

didn't immediately take you to heaven. It's because you've been rewired as a new creation. Old things have passed away, all things have been made new, and there's something that goes off inside of you that says, "I want to be a part of this. I want to partner with Christ in his mission and in his message in my generation for the sake of the gospel so that when we get to heaven, we know that we've made a contribution. We know that we've helped to make a difference."

And isn't it true that when we partner in that, there are times where it becomes difficult? Isn't it true that when we want to take steps of faith, that the enemy's right there breathing down our necks saying, "You're not going to take that step of faith. Look at all the friends you just lost. Look at how difficult that was. You don't want to go all in with Jesus."

And that's why we need momentum to keep on going. There needs to be a missional momentum. Now, momentum is something that you can't see, but you can certainly sense and feel, isn't it? It's a renewed strength. It's a renewed vigor, it's a renewed energy, and every single Christian that's called to Christ is called to be on mission, and there are times where we need missional momentum.

If you're watching some of the NCAA finals here in 2024, you'll hear announcers sometimes talk. Momentum has shifted. It's just gone the other way. Now the score looks the same, everything looks the same, but you get a sense that the other team has a renewed energy, vigor, power or passion. You get the sense that things are getting ready to turn. You get the sense that the tide is going to change.

And all of us as believers in Christ need shot in the arm from time to time, because it's easy to look out at the world and it's easy to hear a pastor preach and it's easy to say, "Yeah, I'm going to do this," and then step out and do it and find that it's really, really difficult to do. So if you're looking for some missional momentum of continuing forward, I believe God has a word for you today.

I want to encourage you, open your Bibles up to Nehemiah, Nehemiah chapter four. We're going to start in verse 12, and Lord willing, finish the chapter here today all the way down in verse 23. And I want to highlight five requirements for missional momentum and just to bring you up to speed in this book. You remember Nehemiah has been called. He's the cupbearer of the king in Persia. He's been called to go rebuild the wall in Jerusalem that's been broken down for over 100 years.

Generations of people are just not seeing God work the way he needs to work and Nehemiah is going to rally the troops, and he's done that. They've begun to build the wall and then opposition has increased. And so now they're experiencing opposition on the outside and opposition on the inside, and both are equally challenging tasks, because many times when people are accusing you from the outside, we're looking for those on the inside to rally with us, but sometimes we go to fear and doubt and concern, and then on the inside we're wondering, "Is this really going to work?" And that's exactly where Israel is in this moment.

God told them that they could rebuild the wall. God anointed Nehemiah to do it and anointed him to build a team to get around him to go do that, and yet here they are

in increased opposition feeling like, "Oh my goodness, are we really going to be able to make this thing go? This is getting extremely, extremely difficult and what do we need to continue? How do we get the momentum we need to finish what God has begun and gotten started?" And I'm going to highlight five of those today.

If you turn to your Bibles to Nehemiah chapter four, starting in verse 12, he just came off talking about what their enemies were saying that, "You can't do this. Not only can't you, but if you continue, we're going to come kill you." That's where we left off, and this is where we start. Notice verse 12. It says, "Then the Jews who live near them came up and told us 10 times they will come us up against us from every place where you may turn, then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears, and bows."

When the enemy said, "We're going to kill you," it's not just that they said at once, Israel heard it so clearly that from all over the wall people were coming and telling Nehemiah, "We're dead. This isn't going to work. This isn't going to happen. The enemy's big. The enemy's going to kill us. The enemy's going to take us out."

Here's what we need to realize. When we stand on the truth and we begin to go God's way, there'll always be dissenting voices from the outside that will say, "Whatever God says isn't going to work." You'll always hear that voice. If you step in faith, you will always hear, "Why did you step in faith?" When Peter got out of the boat and walked on water and started walking, he heard that voice, "What are you doing walking on water? You can't walk on water." And instead of focusing on the voice, he

heard from Jesus saying, "Come." He started looking at all the circumstances and he began to drown.

Anytime you step in faith, there will always be a voice in your ear saying, "Don't do this. It's not going to work. You're going to fail. You're going to look stupid. You're going to look like an idiot. Why did you step out?" And that's exactly what Israel's feeling. And this is what we need to understand first and foremost, that one of the requirements for missional momentum is this. Missional momentum requires preparing now by strengthening godly families for certain opposition. Missional momentum requires preparing now by strengthening godly families for certain opposition.

Now, notice what happens. They came and told Nehemiah 10 different times, "They're going to come against us at every place that you may turn. We can't go anywhere without opposition." That's all they're saying on the inside, "We can't do this. We can't do this. It's not going to work." So what does Nehemiah do? "Then I station men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places."

And what did he station? "I stationed people and families with their swords, spears, and bows." Who does he choose to fight? Families. Families. Why? Because the family is the main unit that God uses to advance his kingdom on planet earth. It always has been the family. It always will be the family.

Now, we say here at BRAVE, "So go the men, so goes the church, so goes the world." Here's a clear way to say it. So go the men, so go the family. So go the family, so goes the church, so goes the church, so goes the world. Men, your most important

responsibility is your family. Wives, your most important responsibility is your family. Parents, your most important responsibility is your family. Make no mistake about it, that's God's word. That's why there's always going to be attack and opposition to what? The family.

Now, let's be clear here. What is a family? A family is a husband, a man with a wife who is a woman bound together by God as one 'til death did they part, and Lord willing, they're given children. That's a biblical definition of a family, okay? And there is attack on that definition for one reason and one reason only, because God's the one that established and instituted it and God's the one that says, "This is what I want to use." And Nehemiah understands that, so he's not putting seal team six on the wall. He's putting families on the wall to fight. And how are they going to fight? They're going to fight God's way. They're going to do it his way. They're going to align his way.

The world is against families. Here's some of the lies that the world says. He tells married people this, "You should focus on your career, your success, your education, your status." He tells single people this, "Don't get married just yet. Focus on your career, your success, your education, and your status." There's nothing more important than the family, okay? Nothing.

So let me talk to married people first. There's nothing more important, men, than your wife. Wives, there's nothing more important in your life than your husband. Parents, there's nothing more important in your life than your kids, period, end of story, according to the word of God.

You can pursue all sorts of things. You can have everybody pat you on your back. But at the end of the day, if you want to leave the longest, most lasting impact you can possibly leave, love your family. Prioritize your family. Make your family number one. Amen?

Now let me meddle with the single people for a minute. Don't let success and career and influence and all that get in the way of you starting a family. Guys, if you're young, when it comes time, you're in your 20s or whatever, get married. Get married. We have too many guys with a paralysis of analysis like, "I don't know if she's the one and she's not perfect." I'm like, "Buy a mirror and look in it. You're not all that either." It's not about finding the perfect person, it's finding someone that wants to be aligned missionally with Jesus so you can partner together as a family and do great things for the Lord.

And ladies, ladies, because there's a lot of women here amen-ing me right now saying, "I'm one of them, pick me," but ladies, same for you. There's only one perfect man in the world. He's Jesus. And your fiance or husband ain't Jesus. He can grow in Jesus. He can follow Jesus. He can become more Christlike like Jesus, but he ain't Jesus and he never will be. Don't expect him to be. Get him to take steps toward Jesus. Amen?

But prioritize family. We got too many young people rolling around trying to get their education, their status and their influence and all this stuff, but refuse to look at pursuing a person for the glory of God so that together they can fulfill the mission of

Christ. And we know that marriage is God's plan and it's his design. He's the one that established it, and the reason we know he established it is because everything God established is always under attack.

That's why marriage is hard. That's why it's difficult because it's the greatest sanctifying tool on the planet. You become one with another sinner, with a different gender, with different backgrounds, with different experiences, with different opinions, with different ways to see the world and you come together as one and then you learn under God to be heavenly sandpaper for each other and become the person you were called to be and you do it for his glory. Amen? It's important. Stay in the fight in your marriage.

If you're single, right, it doesn't mean just marry somebody today. It means you become the person God wants you to become so that when the timing is right, you don't need to change anything about yourself. You can just step into that next phase. Amen? Don't believe the lies of the enemy. The family is an essential unit that God desires for the advancement of his kingdom, and why wouldn't he? Our god's A relational God.

Coming to church is not about getting religion. Coming to church about loving the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. It's relational. It's a relationship with God, and what? Loving your neighbor as yourself. Marriage is the pinnacle of all relationships. That's why it can be the most beautiful thing or the most painful thing that you ever experience in your life.

And let me just say this. If you've been in a situation where you've gone through divorce, it's been horrible, it's been difficult, God's grace is sufficient for you and he loves you and his grace can refresh you and he can take you down a road and still let your best days be ahead. Don't ever continue to live in shame. Amen? Amen? But it doesn't change the fact that family is still important to God. It doesn't change that fact. So prepare now by strengthening godly families for certain opposition.

I grew up in the '70s and '80s, right? It's a different world than the '70s and '80s. I mean, people got mad in the '70s and '80s, parents got mad listening to that music too loud. That's about as bad as it got, I think, or you're watching a bad movie or something. I mean, the world that our children are growing up in is evil. It is so different and we need to be involved in that relationship.

The Bible says, "The time will come," in second Timothy chapter four, "When men will no longer put up with sound doctrine. Instead, they will gather a great number of teachers to gather together to hear whatever their itchy ears want to hear." In other words, we want to go to a place where our pastor just tells us everything we're doing is great, we don't want to change anything.

And sure, there's false doctrines out there and we can talk about that all day, but one of the things we don't teach people enough is that family's that important. If you're in the 0.0001% that's called to celibacy, be celibate and give God all the glory and be excited about it for the rest of your life.

If you're not, at the right time with the right person under God's leadership and

guidance, get married and make a family. "I'm too scared. What about bringing up kids in a world like this?" We need godly kids to grow up in a world like this. Have all the kids you can. Children are a blessing. Amen? Missional momentum requires preparing now by strengthening godly families, which is one of the things that we're trying to do here at BRAVE.

Number two is this. Missional momentum requires rejecting fear by trusting God's present power, rejecting fear by trusting God's present power. Notice this in verse 14. It says, "When I saw their fear" ... Do you know you can see fear? You can see fear. Peter got out of the boat. What did he see? He saw the winds and the waves. He saw fear. Fear is not an emotion. Fear is a spirit. God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and discipline. Fear is a spirit. You can see it on people. When they have that spirit, you see fear in their eyes. They're scared to death.

"When Nehemiah saw the fear, I rose and spoke," to who? "The nobles, the officials and the rest of the people." That means I told everybody. Here's what I told them, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers and sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses. Fight for your families." He said, "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid."

Isn't it true that when you start walking with the Lord, you're going to hear a voice that says, "You should be afraid now. What you start is not going to work out. What you begun isn't going to work. What you say is going to happen isn't going to happen"? No matter what you do for the Lord, you will always hear that voice if you're being faithful.

But here's what God says, "Do not fear." Why? Because you serve a great and awesome God. You serve the great and awesome God. It doesn't say that your problems are great and awesome. It says God is great and awesome. Now, your problem may be difficult. It may seem insurmountable. It may be great. It may be beyond anything you can do, but your problem is never awesome. Our God is awesome. Amen?

I mean, we read in the Bible about the God that when he destroyed the world the first time around, he saved Noah in an ark with his family. You remember that? I wish we'd serve a God like that. That's the God you serve. I wish we served the God that called down fire, that answered Elijah when he called down fire. That's the God you serve. I wish we served the God that brought revival through Jonah. That's the God you serve. I wish I served the God that was strong enough to defeat Goliath. That's the God you serve.

I mean, everything you read about, God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Everything he was able to do then he's able to do now. He still saves, he still heals, he still delivers. He still provides, he still protects. That God you read about is our God in Christ Jesus. Amen?

Reject fear. I mean, just think about how that spirit's speaking to you right now. What are you fearful of? Is it health? Is it finances? Is it family? Is it relationships? I mean, is your job? What is it? Now think about that and I want you to say this and repeat after me. I will not fear. Say it.

Congregation:

I will not fear.

Pastor Jeff:

Say it louder.

Congregation:

I will not fear.

Pastor Jeff:

Now, this time say it like you mean it. I will not fear. Amen? That's what God tells us to do. Speak it. Why? And here's why. It's not because you have the ability to change your circumstances or you have the ability to make the problem go away, but you serve the great and awesome God of the universe that even if the circumstance doesn't change, that God's the God that's going with you and fighting for you. Amen? That's who you serve.

This is the God that parted the Red Sea. This is the God you can trust. So when you start thinking, "I can't," or, "We can't," or, "This isn't going to work," or "This is going to be bad," it's only because you're considering your contribution and the contribution of those around you. But when you start considering the great and almighty God, you start getting excited because you know, "I can't do this, but if God is for me, who can be against me?"

This week one of the things that we did in prayer as a staff is we recited

Philippians chapter four verse eight, where we quoted this and we started talking about different things that we would fear, but what God tells us to focus on. And he says focus on this, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever's right, whatever's pure, whatever's lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there's any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."

Think about that. And so we had staff, just think about ways in which you've seen God work in our church. Think about ways you've seen God work in the academy. Think about ways you've seen God work in our media. Look around the room. Think about ways you've seen God work in the people here or people on your teams at church, and let's just take some time and speak those out loud. And it went on and on and on and on and nobody was making up stuff, but as we were listening, like, "I've seen that. I've heard that. That's awesome. That's great." We were just giving God praise, because if you look for problems, you can always find them. If you look for fear, that spirit will consume you.

"Well, Pastor Jeff, I listen to the news and listen to the radio." Then stop listening to the news and to the radio. It is a spirit of fear, regardless of which station you're tuning into, stop listening. It doesn't mean bury your head in the sand and don't be aware. Be aware of what's going on in the world. Explore it for yourself, but spend 10 times as much time in the word and with God for what he's doing in the world and it will change your heart. Our God is great and awesome. These are not the darkest days. These are the opportunity for the greatest days for us to be salt and light to the world that needs it so desperately. Amen?

Reject fear. You don't need to live in fear anymore. There's so many people that are fearful. I learned in 2020 just how fearful people were. Inside the church, they were fearful, outside the church. Everybody's in fear, fear, fear, fear. And I want you to be as fearful as I am, but you don't need to be. You don't need to be fearful.

I would say this to pastors. Pastors, you don't need to be creative. You don't need to be fun. You don't need to be all these different things. Just do what the Bible tells you to do. Preach the word. Pray. Worship. Send people on mission to evangelize. Bring the fellowship of God together. If you just do those as a bare minimum, God will bless it.

God wants us to reject fear and let him do the work. He's the one who fights for us. He told Israel when they were standing on the precipice of the Red Sea, when they couldn't go any further and things were not looking good because they had the world's largest army behind them ready to kill them and there was no place to move forward because the sea would've drowned them all, God says to tell Moses, to tell the people this, "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent." Our God fights for us. God's not looking for strong, physical people. God's looking for deeply dependent people. God's looking for people that realize that he's the God of the universe and he's the one that can do it.

And then for people who say, "Well, I'm not a pastor. What do I do?", here's what I would say. Honor the Lord with everything he's given you right now with all faithfulness. Be faithful with whatever he's given you. If you're a student, study hard for

Christ's sake. If you have a job, work hard for Christ's sake. If you don't have a job, get a job and work hard for Christ's sake. If you're married, honor your spouse for Christ's sake. If you have kids, protect your kids for Christ's sake. If you have resources, tithe and save and invest for Christ's sake. Build friendships for Christ's sake. Enjoy life for Christ's sake.

We're the people of God. We don't need to live in fear. Friends, you are victors and not victims. I promise you that that's who you are. The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is a stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? The chapter ends by saying, "I would've despaired had I not believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," psalm 27.

How about Psalm 46? "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble." Well, where's God? Right here to help you right now. "Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change." And I love how this ends, Psalm 46:10, "Cease striving, be still and know that I am God. I'll be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth."

Quit striving. Quit making it about you and what you need to do to make your life better or to make circumstances change. Stop. Depend upon the Lord. He'll be exalted in the situation. He'll be known among the nations. The Lord of hosts is with us. That's king Jesus, the king of the Lord's armies. The God of Jacob is our stronghold.

It's not just like you have some distant God up in heaven that's looking down saying, "I could help but I won't." You have the captain of the Lord's army, the Lord

Jesus Christ who indwells you through his spirit saying, "I'll walk through it with you. I'll go through it with you and I will fight for you right in the middle of it." Isn't that good news this morning? We don't need to fear. Whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will see God breathe life into you by rejecting fear and trusting Christ's present power.

The reason you're in the circumstances you're in is so you can trust God in a greater way. That's it. "Well, I didn't expect to go through this. I didn't want to get cancer. I didn't want to have a spouse leave me. I didn't choose to lose my job." No, you didn't. But you know what? God's sovereign in that and he said, "Will you trust me in it? Will you know that I'm Lord over that?"

There's nobody that walks with Jesus on mission for him that gets out of the world scratch-free. You're going to have hurts. You're going to have wounds and anybody who wants to live a godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Put that in the front of your Bible. Call it your Bible promise and just take it at face value. If you live for Jesus, you're going to go through hard times and it doesn't mean something wrong is happening to you. It means you're just simply being faithful, so reject fear and trust God.

Can I just say this to some of you like, "Well, I don't know if I can get married because Jesus might come back soon." Get married. "I don't know if I can have kids. Jesus might come back." Have kids. "I don't know if I should get a job." Yes, you should. Get a job. Right? I mean, there's no sideline stuff. Just get involved and reject fear. Just trust him. Take steps of faith. It's okay.

Third is this. As we're preparing by strengthening godly families, we're rejecting fear, we're trusting God presently with his power, number three is this. Missional momentum happens when we modify tactics by comprehending new situations and circumstances. Missional momentum requires modifying tactics by comprehending new situations and circumstances.

Notice what happened starting in verse 16. "We realized that God, when he saw their fear, he told them not to be afraid," and notice what happens in verse 15, "When our enemies heard that it was known to us that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his own work."

Listen, there's always going to be a voice out there saying so loud that God can't do it, but if you stay in the fight, you'll realize that voice is nothing but a paper tiger. It's nothing but a paper tiger. In 2020, the voice kept getting loud and loud, "Shut your church or we'll shut you down. Shut your church or we'll arrest you. Shut your church."

Here's what I learned. Jesus loves the church. It's our job just to keep it open. It's his job to fight for it. And here's what happened in 2020. Every church that said, "We love Jesus and we're opening the doors to everybody grew," and every church that lived in fear shrunk. And by the way, what happened in 2020 was just a warm-up for what's coming. Get ready. I promise you. I promise you.

If you're looking for a life of ease, don't choose Jesus. Don't. But we got to modify our tactics when we see new things happening. Notice what happens in verse 16. "From that day on, as they heard what was going on, half of my servants carried

on the work while half of them held spears and shields and bows and the breastplates and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah."

So now, wait, wait, wait. Everybody was on the wall and everybody's building the wall, but not anymore. Now it's y'all are building the wall here and in between y'all, y'all are defending the wall here and you're building the wall and you're defending the wall and we as leaders are going to stand behind and help you all do that.

Then he says this in verse 17. "Those who are rebuilding the wall and those who are carrying burdens that may be the bricks and the masonry and all those different things that they're carrying, they took their load with one hand doing the work and the other hand with a weapon." So they're doing the work. They're building, but they're also protecting. They're building but they're also protecting. Both are equally important.

There are some people who get so jazzed about protection, protection, protection. We are called to be protectors. Men, you're called to be a protector of your family. And notice the weapons they have are not used to attack. They're used to protect. There's a huge difference. The weapons we fight with, by the way, are spiritual ones. They're prayer. They're the word of God. They're all those things. God's not looking for men that can do more pushups. He's not looking for men that can bench press a lot. He's looking for guys that are more dependent upon him. But you got to be aware that when you build something for God, that the enemy's always trying to attack it.

I think the church is like building a sandcastle. Every time something gets built

and it looks really good, the enemy's trying to bring a wave in and knock it down. Every time you build your family in a way that looks good, the enemy's always trying to come in and knock it down. Every time you do your finances the way God does, the enemy's always trying to come in and knock it down. Anytime you stand for God, the enemy's always trying to come after you. So work on building it. Build it, build it, build it.

But then some are like, "Well, I'm building it. I'm building it, but I don't need to worry about protecting it." Oh yes you do. You need to think about how might the enemy come against you and how might the enemy come against your spouse and how might the enemy come against your kids and what do you do to fortify that so you don't have to deal with the challenge of it? There's wisdom in what you do.

Ladies of BRAVE, I love you, but we ain't ever getting together for a cup of coffee or a phone call just to share our hearts with one another. That's reserved for my wife. Now, my wife and I can get together with you and talk about what's going on in your life and we love you, but my heart is reserved for her.

"Well, Pastor Jeff, aren't you just afraid that you might do something wrong?" No, I'm not afraid, but I've watched too many guys go down that road and I don't even want to have the obstacle in my path or send out the wrong message that I love anybody other than my wife and my daughters. Amen? So you protect that.

And parents, you protect your kids. Who are they spending time with? What are they looking at at the internet? What are they hearing at school? "Well, that's kind of their business." No, no, no, no. It's your business. Let me tell you something. Your kids

do not belong to the government. They do not belong to the school. They belong to God, and you are entrusted with the responsibility to make sure you're doing it right until they leave your home. "Yeah, but that's kind of intrusive. Dad, you're invading my space." I'm like, "I'm invading your nothing. You're in my house. It is my space."

Your kids were not given to you so you'd have friends when you couldn't make any outside your house. They can be your friend down the road. And if your kid doesn't like that, right, and say, "Well, I'm not going to stay here anymore," help them pack. Go over their budget. "I realize now that you need to look for an apartment, but I realize that your income is zero, so where do you plan to live and how do you plan to get where you want to go?" "Well, I'll just get a job." "How are you going to get there without a vehicle or a license?" "Well, maybe I'll stay at home for a while." "Good choice."

Your kids will thank you for the boundaries that you set. And if you don't know who's talking to them at school or what they're saying or what their teachers are saying or all those things, you're a fool. You are a fool because they're being influenced every single day by somebody and the biggest influence in their life should be you, and you can't be their influence if you're too busy doing other things. Amen? Be involved in your kids' lives. Know what's going on in their lives. My kids didn't clap as loud as they should. Thank you.

But here's what I would say. Don't be married to your methods but never forsake your mission. I mean, they're doing this differently now. Nehemiah's saying this is the way we used to do it. Everybody's building, but now you build and you protect and

we're going to watch. And you see, nobody's saying, "Well, we've never done it that way before. How come they're getting to protect and not getting to build? How come I'm not getting to build and they're getting to protect? How come I got this?"

Nobody's saying that. They're following leadership saying, "Well, this is who God's called to do this and we're going to fold under. We're going to do it God's way and we're going to depend upon God," and away they go. And what happens in the church, many times the church loses its anointing over the years because churches do things the way they've always done thinking that there's something sacred about their method. There's never anything sacred about your method. There's only something sacred about the Lord Jesus Christ, right?

Church can be done in a lot of different ways. We're persuaded about the way God's called us to do church, but it doesn't mean it's the right way. It's the way we've been called to do it. There are different ways to do it. Now, there's certain things God tells us to do. Read the word, preach the word, worship my name, send people on mission, pray, depend upon me. All those things are essential, right? But then there's different ways. How do you set up your governance? Why do you do what you do? When do you gather? Why do you gather then? How do you gather? Do you do campuses? Are you in one location?

All those things we have a lot of freedom to do and it doesn't make one right or one wrong, but the challenge many times with churches is, "Well, this is the way we've always done it." If in 1942, Ethel was awesome on the piano, but in 2024 with arthritis,

she can't even move her hands, it may mean she doesn't need to be the pianist anymore in your church. And we've all seen this, but she's so faithful and she's been here for 60 years or 70 years, but so many people have left because they've come to worship God but you preference the person rather than the worship of Jesus Christ.

Things have to change. They're always changing. Don't ever be married to your method. If you get married, don't just say, "Well, we've always had dates on Thursday." You might need dates on Wednesday and Monday sometimes. You might need to change what's going on in order to accommodate that season. New seasons have different responsibilities of ways they need to be done. Empty nester parents have a different level of free time than those of you that have four kids under the age of 10. It's a different season. It's a more blessed season. It's all sorts of things, right? It's a less noisy season, right? Don't marry your methods.

I mean, think about this. When Peter preached the first sermon, 3000 people got saved. You got to know something, I'm all for street preachers. I'm all for street preaching. I am. I've done it myself. But I remember 20 years ago, 30 years ago, going to London, England and standing in Trafalgar Square and different places and when I would start preaching, a bunch of people would gather with the look on their face like, "What's this guy saying? Is it of any interest to me?"

I've never had that happen in America because in America, if you stand and preach, people are annoyed that you started talking. Even Christians want to walk the other way, because it's not really the marketplace of ideas. In the first century, it was. You know why? Because there was no Instagram for Peter. There was no internet for

Peter. There was no campuses for Peter. When somebody stood up in public and started speaking, it was the marketplace of ideas to say, "Do I really believe what this guy's saying or not?" It was the place to preach.

Now, I'm not saying don't preach. I'm saying continue to preach and be compelled to do everything God wants because his word will never return void, but are there better methods? Are there better ways? Are there different places that people engage differently with the word of God? And how do we saturate that area so that we can lead more people to Jesus? Because our ministry is getting the word of God and people's ears and hearts and minds not doing a certain method in a certain way. See what I'm saying?

How do we worship? What do we do? "Well, we could never have electrical instruments because that will go against God." No, I don't believe that because I believe in this day and age, a lot of people, a lot of you during the week listen to music that involves electrical instruments, so can we not redeem that in music for the glory of God? I believe we can. Other people say, "No, we have to sing a cappella." I've heard some of you sing. I think we do a better job doing the way we do it, right?

But at the end of the day, it doesn't make it right or wrong. Even if you have a strong opinion about it, don't marry your methods. We should always be asking the question, "How do we best fulfill the mission of Christ that he has for us by going into all the nations and making disciples?" Amen? So be willing to modify your tactics once you comprehend new situations and new circumstances.

Number four is this. Number four is this. Encourage unity by rallying people to stay engaged in the mission. Encourage unity by rallying people to stay engaged in the mission. Now, we saw how some of those who had carried burdens, they were holding one hand and building with another hand they were protecting and doing the work. And notice in verse 18, "As for the builders, the ones that are doing the building, each one wore a sword girded as his side as he built while the trumpeter stood near me." Now, what's this trumpeter for? The trumpeter is going to blow when there's a breach in the wall. So you can rally like, "Hey, danger's here. You need to be aware. Here's the danger."

And notice what happens, verse 19, "And I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, I'm telling everybody the work is great and extensive and we are separated on the wall far from one another. At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

You know what happens in the church? People think in order for church to work, we all have to be together all the time. We should do our services all together. If we did, we wouldn't be as big. We can spread out in campuses. We got people listening in Colorado Springs today. We got people in Westminster today. We got people online all over the world today that are part of what God is doing through BRAVE. That's a good thing.

But there has to be a rally point. Teams, their rally point is they have practice. They rally every single day at practice. They're ready to go. Organizations have staff

meetings. They rally together. What do believers have? We have the church to rally together. Why? Because if you're living on mission for the Lord Jesus Christ, there are certain weeks you're going to roll in here saying, "I so desperately needed this today because everything in me wanted to quit." It's like the hymn says, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave this, God, I love. Here's my heart. Oh, take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above."

There are Christians that come to church like this that are thinking about having an affair this week. There are Christians that come to church today that are thinking about cheating their boss next week. There are Christians that are coming to church today thinking about some sort of sin, and they come and they hear the word of the Lord and like, "I can do it one more week and I need to get around to some people that can help me continue to do this because I don't want to go down that road, but I was so ready to go."

There are people that come here so desperate that say their life's not worth anything and they hear from this pulpit that God created you. He loves you. You're fearfully and wonderfully made, and he has purpose for your life. Please come to Jesus and experience the fullness and depth of his grace, love, peace and joy. It's available to you. We need to rally. We need the church.

When I hear people say, "I don't need the church, I am the church," here's what I say. That's because you're not living for Jesus. It's that simple. "No, no. You don't understand. We do retreats. We do this." No, you do your retreat and you do what you want, but you don't want to be a part of the greater body of crisis that's trying to reach

the whole world. It's the church. It's the church. It's the church. It's the church.

Now, if BRAVE isn't your place, that's cool. We're one expression of the local church. We're not the church. We're one local expression of the church, and here's what I tell you. If it ain't BRAVE ... I keep saying ain't today. Ain't's not a word. If it's not BRAVE, find a place that it is and go all in there. Go all in there. I love you enough that I'd rather see you on mission to the full at another place than to be here and be half-hearted in your commitment. That'd be silly. Go be the best that you can.

And we know what it is. We started the message by saying what the great commission is, that Jesus said he had all authority and he wanted us to go under where? All the nations. That means he cares more about the world than just the United States. Now, we happen to be here, so we're persuaded by what's going on in Denver and we're persuaded by what's going on in Colorado and we're persuaded by what's going on in the United States and we need to be kingdom men and women and boys and girls here, but Jesus cares about the world. He cares about India and he cares about Israel and he cares about Russia and he cares about the Ukraine and he cares about Guatemala and the DR, and he cares about everywhere in the world, and that's where he wants us to get the gospel from right here, which is what we should be doing.

I'm telling you, mission must be actionable. Mission must be actionable. Now, the way we say our mission here is to challenge brave warriors for courageous kingdom advancement. That's our verbiage that we use for Matthew chapter 28, verses 18 to

20, where we're challenging brave warriors, those who are bold in their faith or growing in that, resolute in their identity or growing in that, authentic in relationships or growing in that, virtuous in their character or growing in that, engaged in mission or growing in that, warriors because there's a spiritual battle when you do those things. For what? Courageous kingdom advancement. It's not about what's going on here and building a fortress. It's advancing the kingdom. It's not being an empire. We care about the world because Jesus Christ cares about the world.

Now, I've had a lot of people that have spoken into my life say, "Okay, that's good. That's a mission. That's what you're doing. That's what you're doing, but why are you doing it? What's the end goal?" And so I've spent the last year putting it together. You'll hear more about this. I know when I came to each of your campuses, I spoke on this a little bit. We'll speak on it more.

But here's our vision. Here's why we're doing what we're doing. This is why we're gathering on Sunday morning. This is why we're expanding BRAVE media. This is why we started BRAVE Academy and why we're doing it. It's this, because we are assembling a spirit-filled army to fight for the fulfillment of the great commission in our lifetime. That's why we're here. That's what God's entrusted us. Amen?

Here's what that means. If you're a believer in Christ, you're part of the army of the Lord. It's his army and it's not ours, and we're not called to fight with our hands and our fists. We're called to fight for the fulfillment of the great commission, when? In our lifetime.

Now, most people will say, "It's coming. I know one day the great commission will fulfill itself." What about now? What if God was saying, "I'm waiting until y'all get it right and then it'll be done." And I'm entrusting you to get it out there. Now, we can't save anybody. We can't make Jesus save anybody. All we can do is be faithful and sharing the gospel with everybody we know, living the gospel in front of everybody we know with the hope that God will do all the work. When? In our lifetime.

Why do we start a school? So we can assemble a spirit-filled army to fight for the fulfillment of the great commission in our lifetime. I love BRAVE Academy, classical Christian education. If you don't know about it, come on the 16th. We'll teach you all about it. It's the best way of educating anybody. It's how you learn how to learn. But in addition to training up the next generation of truth, beauty, and wonder and knowing how to think and knowing how to be educated, we are training up young kids that are going to fight for the fulfillment of the great commission in their lifetime.

And here's the truth, I only get one lifetime and you only get one lifetime, and I don't know how long my lifetime is, but as long as I have breath, that's what I want to give my life to and that's what I want to invite people into. And that's why BRAVE Church exists. Amen? And what if God did it in our lifetime? Wouldn't that be a beautiful thing? I want to live as though he will and I want to live in such a way, I want to pray as if it's all dependent upon God and then live as if it's all dependent upon us. That's what God wants us to do.

I'm pretty passionate about this subject because I think God is looking for

churches that are willing to stand and do that, to forget what's behind and strain towards what is ahead, to run with perseverance [inaudible 00:42:17] marked out for us. Paul talks about this all the time, that it was the grace of God that worked within him, but he was striving with everything he had. It was both equal, and that's what he needed to do. And we're to do it all the more as we see the day approaching.

So can I just meddle with you just a little bit? Even if you say no, I'm going to. We got too many people that aren't living on mission that would say, "I believe in Jesus. I've repented and believe, but my life's kind of empty," and here's why it's empty, because you were made for so much more. You were made to live on mission. And here's the truth. Can you just hear me on this? God is not calling you to move to a red state that has a beach to make your life more comfortable. God is calling you to be on mission here and paint the state of Colorado red with the blood of Jesus unless he calls you somewhere else.

Now, here's what I mean. If we're going to be a group of people that are going to reach the world, then God is going to raise people up to go someplace, but make sure when you go, it's because God's called you to be part of his church somewhere else. I don't know how many times I've talked to people that have left our church and write me a note or come back and they say, "Pastor Jeff, we love Florida. We love Texas. We love these places, but we can't find a church that's doing what BRAVE's doing and we're empty on the inside."

Then don't go. The church is the primary vehicle for what stimulates your growth. And if you prioritize the church, God will bless your life. I promise you. I mean, I'll give

you an example. When I talked to my wife about when we knew we were going to plant a church, I asked her, "Okay, where would you want to go if we can go anywhere in the world?" She said Hawaii. And I said, "Well, we're not going to Hawaii." I said, "Something stateside." She goes, "Great, San Diego." And I said, "Well, I don't want to go to California." She's like, "Okay, anywhere on the beach in Florida," so I said, "Well, let's go to the mountains where there's absolutely no water and it's a desert and an arid region. That's where God wants us," and that's where we are.

So we vacation in Florida. We vacation on the beach. But don't move there just to be comfortable. Ask God in the coming kingdom to give you a beach home there for all eternity, right? And for right now, enjoy dipping your toes in the Chatfield Reservoir or Cherry Creek Reservoir, and share the gospel with people. Amen? That's what God wants. Because deep down in your heart there's something saying, "I want to be on mission. I want to see the world change. I want to do this and I can do it here, but it may not be the best circumstance."

I remember Kim and I were prophesied over by somebody right before we got married that told us, "We didn't know what it meant at the time." They said, "You're going to move to a desert and you're going to be an oasis and people are going to come from all over and you're going to pour streams of water across the nation." And I remember we were here for about a year and I got a phone call from my wife. She goes, "Isn't Denver like a desert?" I'm like, "Yeah, it is." She's like, "Remember that prophecy?" I'm like, "I do. We're going where God wants us to go."

You need to go where God wants you to go. It doesn't mean it has to be here. It means you can be open-handed and tell the Lord, "I'm willing to go wherever you want, but I want to go somewhere where I can contribute to your church first and foremost." Oh my goodness, he will bless that. He will bless that. Make the church central to what you do. Amen?

And then this final one, this final one. Once we've been engaged in the church, you're rallying, then do this. You really want to have the motivation to move forward. Missional momentum requires maximizing the work by participating wholeheartedly. Maximizing the work by participating wholeheartedly.

Notice this, verse 21. "So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared, from the early morning until it got dark at night." This is not a nine-to-five job. The mission of Jesus doesn't work that way. "At that time, I also said to the people, 'Let each man with his servants spend the night within Jerusalem so they might be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.' So neither I," that's Nehemiah talking, "My brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water."

What was Nehemiah saying? "I'm all in. I'm not just standing here telling you what you all need to do. I'm doing it with you. You're up all night? I'll be up all night first. You need to hold a spear? You need to hold a shovel? I'll hold a spear and a shovel too. Whatever I'm asking you to do, I'm doing with you."

Now, the Bible will say that ... not the Bible, but people will say like, "Leaders eat last. Serve others." Some truth in that. But you fulfill your calling as a leader by going first. Isn't it true that Jesus Christ modeled everything first? He modeled humility by leaving heaven and coming to earth. He modeled humility first. He washed feet and served first. He preached first. He healed first. He delivered first. He performed miracles first. He took abuse first. He was mocked first. He was scourged first. He was killed first. And he rose from the dead first, which is the only reason any Christian will ever rise, and he loved first. Because he loved, that's why we're able to love others.

Jesus Christ modeled everything first. He never asked his disciples to do anything that he hadn't already done. That's what good leadership looks like. That's how we gain momentum. Do you know why? Because here's what the church doesn't need any more of. The church doesn't need any more Christian consultants and thought leaders.

"Let me tell you what I think you need to do. Pastor. Let me tell you what I think should happen. Hey, I'll just stand here." Get off the sideline please, and get in the game and just serve. Do it. Go all in the church. We have too much one-foot disease. We got one foot in the church and we got one foot in the world and we're wondering, "Why is it not working?" Well, put both feet in with Christ. Go all in with him. Do everything he asks you to do. Continue to take steps with him, and you watch what goes on behind you in the wake that you create. That's what God wants.

We don't need any more critics. "Well, I see these things in the church." If you

look for things that are wrong, you will always find them. It doesn't take any intelligence. It doesn't. What takes wisdom and God's help is when I see what's wrong, what can I do to jump in and fix it? How can I contribute to something better? What's good? What's noble? What's right? What's going well? How do we accelerate that? That takes the work of God and our world is filled with critics. Just turn on the radio. Just turn on the TV. Everybody will tell you everything that's wrong and why you should live in fear. Stop listening to ungodly. People talk about things they know nothing about.

I have a friend that always tells me, "If you want to beat a dog, you can find a stick." If you want to look for something wrong, like, "Pastor Jeff, there's probably some things wrong in your life. I'm going to discover them," I know more of them than you do. "Well, I'm going to find things wrong with this church when I really get in there." There's tons wrong, because we're totally imperfect people serving a perfect God. But if you come in and say, "How can we accelerate the beauty and majesty of Christ and how can I be part of his mission until he gets back and how can I go all in to help, even if it's uncomfortable for me? How can I do that?" Man, there's awesome opportunity for every man, woman, boy and girl here to accelerate everything so that we can see God do immeasurably more than all that we could ask or think according to his power that works within us. To him be the glory in Christ Jesus and in the church for and ever, amen and amen and amen. That's what God wants for us.

Friends, the church is not a playground. It's a battleground. It's a battleground. It's the Lord's army. You're a part of it. He's not asking you to do anything that would ever go against his word. He's not asking you to hurt to anybody. He's not asking you

to yell at anybody. He's not asking you to be rude to anybody. Here's what he's asking. He's asking you to be on mission for him. He's telling you the reason you feel this inside of you at such a deep, profound level is because that's what I created in you, and you're not being able to exercise that to the full and the way that you'll be the fullness of everything God made you to be is to find a local church and serve it with your whole heart.

Give your best time. Give your best effort. Give your best energy. Give your best resources. Pray your socks off for God to do a work in that church. Worship your face off. Tell God he's so worthy. Live your life in such a way that when other people see you, you are salt and light in this dark world. And I'm telling you this. I believe this with my whole heart. If I could live in any generation, if God allowed me to live in any generation, this is the moment, this is the time that I would choose to live with all of you, because this has the greatest opportunity to see the greatest gospel growth in the history of the world, and God's allowing us to be a part of that.

Don't you look forward to being in heaven someday and God tapping you on the shoulder and maybe there's hundreds of millions or a billion people that are in the kingdom because of what God did through here? That's what he wants to do. "Pastor Jeff, I can't believe it." I know. Grow your faith. He wants to do it right here from Denver, Colorado to touch all the nations of the world. And I believe by God's grace, he's going to do that very thing, and he's going to do it through you and you and you and you and all of you. And that's why I'm excited.

And this should be a shot in your arm, because no matter what you've been

through and no matter where you are, say, "Well, I can't now. I don't know." No, that's just your shame. Just bring it to the cross and receive the forgiveness of Jesus Christ afresh all over. Hear him whisper in your ear, "I love you and I'm proud of you right where you are. I can build from where you are and take you in the new direction, because you were made for more." I was made for more. All of us were made for more. Amen. Amen. Would you stand with me?

Father in heaven, we just pray that we would be men, women, and boys and girls that would take you at your word, that would see you do everything your word says that you can do for your glory. Lord, move in our church, move in our school, move in our media, move in our lives. Lord, use us for divine appointments to advance your kingdom. We give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise in Jesus' name, amen and amen. Can we give God praise this morning?