



Message **Transcript**

Necessary Pauses

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As we get ready to hear from the Lord, would you pray with me? Father, we prepare our hearts before you this morning. We are so grateful. We're eternally grateful because, Lord, we believe that you are the one that does all the saving. Our job is to faithfully proclaim the gospel.

Your job is to do the work. Thank you for all of the individuals and families that served so faithfully all week and all that they did to make this week special for kids. And, Lord, thank you for those that you saved, Lord, may you raise them up to godliness and maturity so that they can impact the next generation for Christ. Father, we gather here as your people this morning believing that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you're speaking. And our prayer this morning is speak, Lord, for we want to hear you.

And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to you, who will believe what he says and who will, by faith, put into practice what he shows you. Will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen. Amen. We've been in the book of Nehemiah, and this morning we're going to be talking about the wall dedication. And as we're in Nehemiah chapter twelve, you'd be thinking about the dedication of the wall.

Have you ever thought, why is it every time that Israel did anything, they stopped and paused and dedicated? I mean, when they crossed over the Jordan to go into the promised land and the river, the Jordan river had parted, they pulled out twelve stones and they built a monument to what dedicate that day to the Lord. When they built the temple, they had a temple dedication. It seems like everything they did had some significance. They would pause and they would dedicate.

And I think it's important that we understand this because we live in a very, very busy culture. Amen. I mean, we live in a culture where there's so many things going on that even when we're trying to schedule something with somebody, sometimes it can take days, sometimes weeks, sometimes months. Sometimes we begin the conversation by saying, I know you're so busy. So busy, too.

Is there a way that we can possibly combine our schedules to get together just for a short period of time? And so when it comes to things in church, even when it comes to adding to our schedules, like, hey, you should be in church, hey, you should join a cadre. Hey, you should be in our core and find a place to serve. Hey, you should

be here on first Tuesdays. There's many times that we reject that because we're like, I am so busy already.

I don't have time for these kind of things. And we live in a culture that loves to pile things on, don't we? I mean, we love it that when we see somebody that's an athlete and they're hurt and they make it all the way to the finish line, we're like, oh, they did it. Or when we see somebody that's busy and they can add even more to their plate and they can do even more, we celebrate that. And we have comments in our culture where we say things like this, don't just sit there, do something.

I mean, we don't champion people that just sit. And yet doesn't the Bible say in psalm 46 ten, cease striving or be still and know that I am God, I'll be exalted among the nations, I'll be exalted in the earth? Jesus said in Mark, chapter 135, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus went to solitary places where there he prayed, if you study the life of Jesus, you will find that there were several times where he paused in his schedule for relationships. Isn't it interesting? I mean, who lived a life that had more significance than Jesus Christ?

Nobody. Nobody ever has. Nobody ever will. He's the God man who came to this world, fulfilled the law, died on the cross and rose from the dead. Nobody's going to even come close to that.

And yet, Jesus, in all of his ministry, whether it was healing people, raising people from the dead, doing whatever he did, he had time to pause. He had time for his dad. He had time for, for other people. And yet we can't seem to find time for anything, let alone the things of God. So today what I want to talk to you about is necessary pauses.

Don't just do something, sit there. That kind of lifestyle. Cause we have a hard time sitting, don't we? We have a hard time just pausing. We have a hard time doing nothing.

Because have you ever noticed that even when you're doing nothing, your mind is thinking 70 million things that you've got to do and you don't have time to just sit and do nothing? That's why this is so important. Because when they were dedicating the wall to the Lord, they were taking a necessary pause that was not only going to be

honoring to the Lord, but was going to be beneficial for them. And if you want to learn how to take necessary pauses and you want to learn how to grow in your faith, then this is essential that you understand what this looks like. So I want to invite you to open up your Bible to Nehemiah, chapter twelve.

Nehemiah, chapter twelve. We're going to begin in verse 27 today and we're going to make our way through the chapter of chapter twelve. And if you remember, we just came out of that laundry list of names in chapters eleven and twelve, probably the most unfriendly preaching text in the entire Bible, and talked about last week how every name matters and how they served in so many of a variety of capacity. And now that the wall's done, you might think, well, the wall's done. God called Nehemiah.

He fulfilled the vision, he trusted God, he rallied people. He dealt with external conflict, he dealt with internal conflict. He dealt with all the things. He persevered. He came through.

He was honoring God the whole way. And they finally gathered the whole city. They populated the whole city. God's built the wall in 52 days. It's been miraculous.

And isn't that enough? Why don't you just go on and live your life now honoring the Lord? And yet, guess what they do? They stop. They pause.

And they're going to take significant time to dedicate what God has done back to him. And this is where our story picks up in Nehemiah, chapter twelve and verse 27. And I'll give you the first benefit of necessary pauses. And it's this. Necessary pauses encourage a fresh cleansing of confession and repentance.

Necessary pauses encourage a fresh cleansing of confession and repentance. Notice verse 27. Now, at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sought out the Levites from all their places to bring them to Jerusalem so that they might celebrate the dedication with gladness, with hymns of thanksgiving, and with songs to the accompaniment of cymbals, harps and lyres. So notice what they're going to do when they do this dedication. It's not just like they put on their calendar.

Hey, come if you can. Don't worry about it if you can. They're going to take

significant time in the planning process and they're going to make sure all the worship leaders are there. The first group of people they want are the spiritual leaders to be there. And then they're going to gather them.

And there's three things that they're going to need. They're going to need great joy. They want to come in with gladness, right? That's what they need to have. They're going to make sure that they're joyful when they get there.

They're going to come in with hymns of thanksgiving. So they're going to come and sing, and then guess what they're going to have? They're going to have accompaniment. They're going to have cymbals, harps and lyres. You're going to see that they have trumpets later.

They got musical instruments. Just file that away when they're getting ready to dedicate to the Lord, that they have music, gladness, and they're going to sing. Verse 28. So the sons of the singers were assembled from the district around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites and from Bethgil gal and from their fields in Geba Asmaveth. For the singers had built themselves villages around Jerusalem.

We learned last week that a 10th of them ended up populating Jerusalem, and many lived in the suburbs. And then notice this. Verse 30. It said, the priests and the Levites, these are the spiritual leaders. What did they do?

They purified themselves. They also purified the people, the gates and the wall. So before this ceremony is even gonna get going, file away what they're getting, file away who they're recruiting. File away how they're gonna do that. We'll get to that in a second.

But what do they need to make sure of first? That they're pure before the Lord, they purified themselves. The spiritual leader said, we have to be pure before God, and then we're gonna purify our people before God and the gates in the wall. Have you ever thought about how in the world do you purify a gate or a wall? I mean, have you thought about that?

It's not like they're gonna just take Lysol and wipe the gate and purify it from any germs. What do they mean when they purify? In the Old Testament, purification had to do with the blood covering the sins of the people. Seemingly what they were gonna do is paint blood on the gate. Seemingly what they were gonna do is put blood on the wall.

What were they saying? God, this is your town, this is your city, this is your gate. Everything here belongs to you. Nothing is of us, Lord. It's not unto us.

It's not unto us, but it's unto you, being the glory. So they say, before we're gonna celebrate, before we're gonna sing, before we're gonna gather everybody, before we're gonna honor you, we have to be right before you. And that's an important principle for a necessary pause. One of the reasons that you need to pause is so you can hear the Lord speak to you about you. You have to hear him speak to you about you, you have to open the word long enough so God can talk to you about you.

When you pause in front of the Lord, sin will surface. If you just keep running, you'll end up stuffing your sin beneath to be purified. You stand before the Lord, and

you ask the Lord to speak to you about you. Search me and try me, O Lord. See if there's any offensive way and lead me in the way everlasting.

And you take time to do that. Has anybody here other than me noticed that? Every time that you want to be intentional about spending time with the Lord, it's very difficult. This week I really had nothing to do with high five. Not much at all.

Didn't organize it, didn't plan it. Our team did. Our leaders did. It went off without a hitch. It was great.

And I was at home on Monday saying, I'll just pray. That'll be my role this year. And wouldn't you know it, as I sat down to pray, how many times my phone began to ring until I finally said, I'm turning it off because I'll never be able to sit here and focus. Why? Because the enemy doesn't want me to spend time in his presence.

The enemy doesn't want you to spend time in his presence. And if you don't

believe me this week, set aside some time. Set aside just a short amount of time, put it on your calendar, and say, lord, this is your time. This week. I dedicate it to you.

I want to hear you talk to me about me. And you watch how difficult it is to keep that time. And I'm not talking about a drive by. I mean, I don't want you to get all legalistic and be like, well, how much time? But just think about it.

If you set a lunch appointment, most of you that set a lunch appointment, we're gonna get together for coffee. You usually do it for 60 to 90 minutes. Most of you don't say, hey, I'll meet you in the drive thru at Starbucks. I got three minutes. Roll down your window.

But yet that's how we spend time with the Lord. We get dressed, we get showered, we get ready, we read a verse. We're like, okay, God, what do you got for me? I gotta get out the door. I gotta get the kids to school.

I gotta get to work. I gotta do this. What do you got? I got three minutes. And we

wonder why God doesn't speak to us about us.

Cause when we don't take the time and pause and say, lord, this is important that I hear you, the living God, and that you speak into my life about me. Then we miss it all. Cause if we're really gonna be the people God wants to be, then we need to be purified. Matthew chapter five eight says, blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. When you desire to be purified, there's no more rationalization about your sin, because then you can spend time before the Lord and you begin to talk about all the different senses and all the different ways in which God can talk to you.

Hey, God, talk to me about my eyes. What is it that I'm looking at right now? What is it I looked at this week. Was everything I saw pleasing to you? Were you pleased with what I looked at and how I looked at it?

Were you pleased with my mind and what I've been thinking about and the thoughts that I'm thinking and what. What I'm doing? Or is there anything in my mind that needs to change? Lord, how about my tongue? I'm thinking about all the conversations I've had this week with my spouse and with my kids and with my work or

at school or in my friendship group.

And Lord, did everything that came out of my mouth. Was that pleasing and honoring to you or, Lord, what are the things that I'm listening to? Are those the things that you want me to engage with? Are those things going into my soul in a way that's not pleasing? And if you can't take time before the Lord to help you with this, then you can't continue to grow to the fullness of what God wants you to be.

Now, many of us would talk about the importance of confession when it comes to a non believer, that as a non believer, we need to confess our sins so we can be saved. But how much more so now that I'm a believer? Because when I turn from my sin and I place my faith and trust in Jesus Christ, I belong to him forever. No one can snatch me out of his hand. And yet, what I've discovered is since becoming a believer, I still have sin with me.

I can't escape it. I can't get away. And the more time I spend with the Lord, the more depth of my depravity he shows me. And the further I've been removed from my sin, the more he has shown me my sin. And why is that so important?

Because it keeps me from becoming a pharisee. Because if I'm not close to the Lord, then I'm going to think, well, yeah, I used to deal with that. And, yeah, I used to deal with that, and what's your problem? But when God's speaking to me about me, it's very humbling, because I see the depths of how bad sin has marred every part of my life and how I still can't escape it. And then I thank him for showing me that.

But I yearn for the day where I don't have it anymore. I yearn for the day that my eyes are completely pure. My heart's completely pure, and my mind's completely pure, and my life's completely pure. And what I touch and what I taste and what I say and what I hear, it's all pure. I won't know how to sin when I meet you all in heaven.

I'm gonna be awesome, because Jesus will have transformed my life. And until then, I'm still a work in progress. So I've got to spend time with him and realize that as I'm growing in Christ, he still wants to show me ways in which I can grow in my purity. Otherwise, I begin to think, well, I'm a Christian, but I just deal with that. And I deal with that.

But maybe that's not what God wants me to deal with anymore. Maybe that was okay over here. Because what I found in my christian journey is there were many things for me immediately that begin to change. But there's been some of them 35 years later that I'm still in process with. And even the things that have changed drastically, even in some of those areas I'm still in process with.

There's no area of my life where I've said I've attained perfection here. This is where I've got it all together here. I don't have any of those areas in my life. I have dependence in all areas of my life. And if I don't take the time to pause necessarily before the Lord and let him speak to me about me, I can't continue to grow to the fullness of who I am in Christ.

If you don't take the time to pause necessarily before the Lord, he can't show you the changes that you need to make so you can become the person you need to be. And it's beautiful the way the Holy Spirit does you. Because the Holy Spirit will show you. I love you. I already paid for all that I died for.

I love you. You don't need to work on this to get better. I want you to be aware of areas. You can depend on me even more. Cause I can grow you out of that, too.

And that's the beauty of the gospel. The gospel is not just getting me saved so I can go to heaven. The gospel is sanctifying me so that I'll be ready to meet my savior. So there's a desire to be pure, a desire for a sin to be cleansed, and a growing hatred towards what you used to participate in. I've heard too many testimonies over time from people that have lived colorful pasts that when they get saved, they talk more about how awesome and great their past was.

And Jesus, they don't really talk about that excitingly about what I found is just the opposite. There's nothing in my past when I was apart from Christ that I would celebrate. And the further I move from that, the more disgusted I am with what I used to be, the more I'm like, I can't believe you acted like that, said that, talked that way, thought that way. Like, what were you thinking? Disgusting.

And the more God grows me, the more I continue to say it. That should be the

ongoing feeling we have. And if you have that, there's a humility that comes in relationships. And yes, we're called to judge the people of God as we grow in them, but not be judgmental to the people of God. You lose your judgmental spirit when you spend the majority of time letting God talk to you about you.

Because then it's like, I'm not judging you because you don't even know what he's doing to me. He's growing me, and he can grow you too. But what does the enemy hate? He hates you spending time in the presence of God. That's why if you study the life of Jesus, what was his whole ministry about spending time with his father?

Very early in the morning he goes and spends time with his father. He's getting ready to heal a bunch of people. Master, we've been looking all over for you. Where have you been? Did not know I had to be in my father's house from the time he was young.

Who's he talking to when he's on the cross? His dad. What does he want to do? I want to please the father. And Jesus is sinless and has always been sinless and will always be sinless.

So he wasn't even pausing to get his sin condition right. He was pausing because there's nothing more glorious than spending time with the father. And yet it's rhetorical. Think about how much time you paused this week just to spend time with you and God. Think about it, because there should be nothing on your schedule that's more important than that.

And then there's this cleansing of confession. Confession is admitting that you're a sinner. One John one eight says, if we say we are without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If you say, well, I used to be a sinner, but now I'm not, then you're deceiving yourself.

You're still a sinner. Welcome. Everybody here is still a sinner. You can't get away from it. It's part of who you are in your DNA, and you don't get released from it until you meet Christ face to face.

So you can have victory over it. You can press it down through Christ. You can crucify your flesh. You can resist the devil, and he'll flee from you, but you can't get away from the sin that's in you. So confession means this.

It means naming your sin out loud to God, sometimes to others. And if you don't hear what God said, this is a sin, and you need to call it a sin, then you can't really name it, and you can't really grow out of it. It's trusting God to continue to forgive and cleanse you. It's when you live in your new identity. I used to be this, but now I'm mad.

I used to be a sinner. Now I'm a saint. And just so you know, yeah, you are a saint. You are a new creation. Yes, old things have passed away, and yes, you are a saint that sometimes sins, but don't make no mistake about it, you still sin.

You still sin. I mean, you can't escape it. Have you ever noticed, Christian? Have you been a Christian for a long time, that there were parts of your past? You're like, I'm not there.

I'm not there. I'm not there. I'm not there. Thank God, I'm not there. But you circle back and you're like, why did I do that?

How come I flew off the handle? Why did I act like this? Why did I say, what's wrong with me? Well, you have this sin DNA in you that hasn't been released yet. And God is trying to grow you through that.

And it's reminders in your life of how powerful the cross of. Of Jesus Christ is that he still forgives you. Amen. That's the gospel. That's the gospel.

And when you pause, it invites God to give you a fresh cleansing with confession and then repentance. Repentance is not just, oh, I'm sorry, I got caught. Repentance is when the kindness of the Lord leads you away from what you used to do, where there's this repudiation from it. You know, proverbs 20 611 talks about a dog returning to his own vomit. And it doesn't take much of an expositor to tell you what that looks like.

But haven't you had those experiences where, like, I'm done with that. I'm done with that, and you go visit it again? Like, what are you doing? What am I doing? What?

Because we don't repudiate it. God wants us to hate our sin, this false gospel that's taught in our culture, which is like, hey, keep enjoying your sin, but as long as you name Jesus, you'll go to heaven. Not true. Not true. Heaven is for those that no longer want to live in their sin and want to trust Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin.

Amen. And he welcomes all and anybody that comes to him. That way, he will never turn away, because that's the beauty of our God. But when we pause long enough, we get a true picture of who we are and what God saved us from and how he calls us and how he's growing us. And we get this fresh cleansing of our sin, fresh confession of sin, fresh repentance of sin, so we can continue to grow in him.

Let me give you a second one. Necessary pauses also encourage a joyful celebration of sacrifice and generosity. Necessary pauses. When you pause long enough, it will encourage a joyful celebration of sacrifice and generosity. Notice verse

31.

So then I had the leaders of Judah come up on top of the wall, and I appointed two great choirs, the first proceeding to the right on the top of the wall toward the refuge gate. HoShahiah and the half leaders of Judah followed them with Azariah, Ezra, Meshulam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, and some of the sons of the priests with trumpets. So now notice they've added trumpets. And Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mataniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zakur, the son of Asaph, and his kinsmen, Shemaiah, Azarel, Melilah, Gileah, Mai, Nathaniel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David, the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them at the fountain gate.

They went directly up the steps of the city of David by the stairway of the wall above the house of David to the water gate on the east. So there are going to be two choirs that are going to appoint first choir. You just heard the roll call of the first choir. And they're gonna go up the steps and they're gonna get on the wall and go all the way around counterclockwise. Now, it's interesting, because if you remember in this book, when they were building the wall and they had people on the outside telling them how bad it was gonna be, there was one guy that said even if a fox were to climb on this

wall, this thing would be crushed.

Now that God's completed the wall, here's what they're gonna do. Not only would it hold a fox, it will hold all our spiritual leaders. And we're gonna stand on this wall, and we're gonna sing as loud as we can on this wall. To let our God know he's much greater than what you say we couldn't do. Isn't that awesome?

So now they've got all these instruments. Now they've got trumpets. And they built one choir going counterclockwise around the wall. And now you're going to hear about the other choir. Now, in that first choir, you had Ezra, who was the lead scribe, who was the spiritual leader of the nation.

Nehemiah is going to be part of choir number two. So notice verse 38. The second choir proceeded to the left. While I followed them with half of the people on the wall. Above the tower of furnaces, to the broad wall and above the gate of Ephraim, by the old gate, by the fish gate, the tower of Hananel and the tower of the hundred, as far as the sheep gate.

And they stopped at the gate of the guard. Then the two choirs took their stand in the house of God. So did I and half the officials with me and the priests. Eliakim, Messiah, Minimum, Micaiah, Elianiah, Zechariah, Hananiah with the trumpets and Messiah. Shemaiah, Eliezer, Uzzah, Jehanenen, Malkija, Elim and Azir.

And the singers sang with Jezariah, their leader. And on that day, they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy. Even the women and the children rejoiced so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar. Do you get a picture of what's going on here? So they've gathered everybody and who's in the choir?

Not just choir members, spiritual leaders. Ezra's in choir number one as a priest. Nehemiah, who built a wall, who's a, you know, construction guy is in choir number two, and they're all standing on the wall going almost all the way around the city, and they're going to sing so loud with such great joy that everybody's going to hear them, not only in Jerusalem but all around the suburbs. That's how loud they're going to sing. Do you think they cared about what God did?

Because, you know, they've been waiting 130 plus years to see God move. And God is moving and they're going to give praise and glory to God. Amen. I mean, you think about it, because some of these guys would be like, hey, we built the wall. We've been slaving.

We've had to protect ourselves. We've been carrying swords and carrying mortar and carrying bricks. Give us a break. Let us sleep one day. Nobody wants to do that.

What do they do? They gather. They get the instruments. They assemble two choirs and they celebrate. Do you know every party we have, this is exactly what we do.

Think about a wedding, ladies. When you get engaged, chances are you don't get married that night. There's a whole planning process, and part of the planning process is the reception. And part of the reception is who's going to be the band or are we going to have a dj and who's going to sing and how are we going to dance and who's going to cut the cake and when are we going to. The celebration is planned out.

It's what we do when we go to a concert, even for some of you. Like, well, I don't really sing well, yeah, you may not sing, but you find people who can. And they gather and they sing their songs and then you just hum along with them. But what does it mean to celebrate? It means you participate with it.

Psalm 104 says, let us enter his gates with thanksgiving in our hearts and enter his courts with praise. Psalm 96, one says, sing to the Lord a new song. Psalm 150 says, praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise him with cymbals.

Praise him with a liar. Praise him in the heavens. Praise him. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. So what are they doing?

They said, God's the one that gave them great joy. It means this. When they gathered as a people of God, there was no. Oh, I have to. I'm busy that day.

How come I got to come in. No, when they got there, they were coming with joy. And what were they coming to do? Sing. Why?

Because singing is different than speaking. And the reason God commands us to sing is there's a depth of communication when you sing versus when you just speak it. Amen. If you don't believe me, take a normal conversation, start singing in it. Sing to your spouse, sing to your kids, sing to your boss, sing to your employees.

It'll feel really strange because there's a depth that goes off in singing. And I know some of you, we've met, I've stood by you, and you can't sing. I get it. But then the Bible gives you the option of just making a joyful noise to the Lord. But there's something about singing, it's different.

And even those that say, well, I'm not really the singing type. You sing in your car, you sing in the shower, you sing when you're riding your bike, you sing when you're all alone, you sing. Why? Because God created you to do that. And in heaven, you're going to sing.

And when people gather, they gather with joy. They're not wondering, well, who are the singers? And, well, what songs are they going to sing? I mean, we're talking 400 some years before Christ. They didn't have the speaker systems and all the musical instruments we have and all these things.

So they're lining up on both sides of the city so they can hear the echo and different rounds and doing different stuff so they can sing to the Lord. And they're going to meet at the temple in the house of the Lord. And they're going to do all this. Why? Because God's so important to them that they're pausing to let him know you're worthy.

Why do we gather in church on a Sunday? Because he's worthy. And in case you were wondering, why should I go to church? I don't know if I have time for that. Here's

why.

Because the eternal God of the universe, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons making up one God created everything you see out of nothing, and he didn't need to do it. But in love, he created the world in six literal days. And on that first day, he created human beings in his image. Everything you see and don't see was created by our God, and he created you in his image. And he told us how to have relationship with us.

And even though we rebelled against him and we decided to live our own way, he said, no problem. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, said, I'll go and do what you could never do. I will fulfill the law. I will live on the earth. I'll identify as human forever because I, as God will put on flesh.

I will be the God man for all eternity. I will die for your sins and be crucified. I'll be buried in a grave. I'll raise from the grave. I will rise from the grave.

I'll invite anybody who wants to turn from their sin in me. I will give them eternal life. I will deposit my holy spirit in their life. I will walk with you every single day of your life. I will bless you.

I will prosper you. I will seek you. I will help you. I will help you get rid of sin.

I will help you walk in holiness. And one day I will present you faultless before my father in heaven for all eternity. And so you can just enjoy that as baseline stuff. That's why we gather on Sunday.

And yet for many, it's like, well, I'm just kind of tired. My son's got a baseball game. We got an activity. We're going to the mountains. Seriously, you don't have a proper view of God.

It should hurt when you can't be here. Even when I'm on vacation, I go to other

churches and I love other churches, and we like being in other churches and we have fun in other churches. And it's good because I get to sit with my family and I'm not preaching. And we worship together and talk about the message afterward. I like it, but I miss it here with our people that are going after our God in the same way, in the same city that want to see change take place.

There's something about being here. And one of the reasons I love this church is people sing. We had our warriors summit our men's weekend a few months back, and 1300 plus guys in this very room singing something powerful about that. That's why sometimes you'll see our worship team back up as if to say, let's all just sing this together. Let's listen to each other's voices.

We're not here to just perform for you. We're not here to see if you like our songs. We're here so that we can gather together and give God praise. And what happens is when everybody's singing praise to the fullness of God, God does something special. Love worshiping it, brave, love it.

I love worshiping with you. I love it because you get this. Let everything that has

breath praise the Lord. And then notice this, as this continues. It's got to cost you something.

This celebration is a sacrifice. It's a sacrifice. I mean, Hebrews 13:15 says it this way it says, through him, then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. That is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name. Praise should cost you something.

It should cost you something. Notice verse 44 in Nehemiah twelve. On that day, as they're singing, men were also appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the firstfruits and the tithes to gather them from the fields of the cities. The portions required by the law. For the priests and the Levites, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who served, for they performed the worship of their God in the service of purification, together with the singers and the gatekeepers, in accordance with the command of David and his son Solomon.

For in the days of David and Asaph, in ancient times, there were leaders of the singers songs of praise and hymns of thanksgiving to God. So notice this. What are they doing when they get together? We're praising, we are singing, we're giving him

our best. There's something about when you give God your best.

If you're coming in with gladness in your heart for all that the Lord's done for you this week and all the ways he's thought about you, and the fact that your heart's still beating because of that, the fact that you still have moisture in your eye because he caused you to blink once every five to six seconds, the fact that you're still breathing, the fact that your kidneys and lungs are working okay or well enough to be here, or that you can walk or be in a wheelchair, however you got it. You're here saying, God, you're worthy because you're the most important in my life and I'm gathering. And it's costing me something. It's costing me sleep, it's costing me time, it's costing me my energy, it's costing me some relationships, it's costing me a trip, it's costing me some other things. It may even cost me financially.

It doesn't matter. I'm here because you are worthy of everything that I have.

Amen.

Now think about this. Think about this. They spent 130 years as a disaster of a nation, the reproach of all the other nations. And God's turning the tide. And you know

what they're doing this for?

They're saying, may it never be again. May our nation always reflect the glory of God. May this generation pass the baton to the next generation. May we live for him. We'll sacrifice anything because no matter what we give, we can't repay you for everything.

You've done for us, so it's joyous for us. It's not a have to. It's not a must. I know sometimes we talk about tithing, and we've talked about it before, people, oh, here comes the 10% talk. If that's your idea of tithing, you've missed it.

Old Testament tithe is probably about 23 and a third percent, if you count all the festivals and all this. But they're willingly going to do that, because they're like, may the spiritual vitality of our nation be prominent to our resources, our time, our energy, because if that changes and God's with us, everything else in our nation will change. So we're prioritizing this. But New Testament believers, it's not tithe. I mean, it's a good place to start.

New Testament is this. God owns everything you have. How do you give to him lavishly? What does that look like? How can you be generous with the things of God?

Generous does not mean calculated. Generous means outlandish, ridiculous, and over the top. That's what generosity looks like. If you give generously, it's going to change your life. And why would they want to do that?

Because when you give lavishly to the Lord, it's memorable, and it's honoring. You say, well, what would that look like in my life? Think about this. Think about the largest check you've ever written in your life. Multiply that by ten and give it to church next week, and you will remember that service for the rest of your life.

Do you see what I'm saying? Because where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. It's memorable. We gave. We did this.

I gave. I gave generously. And generosity looks different to everybody else. There was a widow in the New Testament. She had two small copper coins worth less than a penny.

She put it all in generous, off the charts. Not talking about a mount. I'm talking about your heart. But when you're generous with the things of God, it becomes memorable, and it becomes honoring, because you know you made a contribution to see God do the work. You're never gonna repay him.

You're never gonna give God something where you give him a gift so large that he says, oh, my goodness, I never thought we could get this work done, but thanks to you, I got it. He doesn't need you. He doesn't need your time, money, or energy to get his work done. He wants your heart. He wants it to be memorable for you.

He wants it to be honoring for you. He wants it to be sacrificial for you. Why? So that Israel doesn't get into the same situation they were before, that Israel can enjoy the blessings of God presently. I talked to a lot of people that attend, brave, that come and they'll say things like this.

I'm so glad we found a church that preaches the word, that worships him, that gives us an opportunity to be in God's house. Go out and share the message. It gives us an opportunity, sir. I love it. I love that we found this place.

We need more churches like this. Great. We do. Well, how's it going to happen when all of God's people say we're just going to contribute as much as we can, time, effort, energy, money, resources, so that God, you do whatever you want. And when God looks down and sees his house, give generously to him, he goes over, above and beyond that.

Now, I'm not teaching prosperity gospel, hear me. I'm not telling you if you give generously to God, you're going to be rich. It's not what I'm saying. I'm saying you can't outgive God. That's what I'm saying.

And even when God blesses you, however he chooses to bless you, and even if he does it financially with resources, it's not even for you. It's to what? Continue to

scatter more seed and bless God even more and advance his kingdom. Amen. So sometimes we say, man, that would be lavish.

That'd be crazy. Do you remember the woman with the alabaster jar of perfume written about in the gospels the week that Jesus was going to be crucified? She brings his alabaster jar of perfume. We find out later it's worth a year's wage. And she begins to pour it on Jesus feet.

She's weeping so hard, she's wiping his feet with her tears and her hair. And everybody in town knows that this woman's of ill repute. They know she's not a good woman. She's a sinner, they say. And they say if he knew who this was, he would never allow this to happen.

And he's looking around, he's like, hey, when I got here, y'all didn't do much for me. Not like you offered me a lot. But this woman comes in and she's anointing my feet for burial. She did a beautiful thing. She did a lavish thing.

She spent a year's worth of wage on that. And you know, the disciples, they were appalled by this. You know the specific one that was appalled? Judas Iscariot. You know what he said?

This could have been sold for a years worth of wage and given to the poor.

Did Judas have a heart for the poor? No, because if Judas did, he would have done that anyway. Anytime you hear people complain, well, I can't believe they're doing that with the money. That's somebody that doesn't have the heart of God. The poor is always.

You can always be generous. You can always give more. You can always be more lavish. It doesn't take away from being generous to Jesus. Be as lavish as you want to Jesus in such a way that people will think you're weird.

I can't believe you go to church every week. I can't believe you're giving all your time to that church. I can't believe you serve that church. I can't believe you give money that. I'm not giving it to the church.

I'm giving it to Jesus. He's done everything for me. How could I not? I want to know in this life that he sees my heart and he gets my best on everything. And they're collecting this money and they're doing these things.

And people are giving joyously, not under compulsion, because they're saying our nation is in a shambles. Because we haven't prioritized God. We're prioritizing God, because we know if we do, he'll change our nation. Same truth still applies. Same truth still applies.

We'll talk more about politics as the year continues. But there's not one man, not one woman, not anybody. They're not going to change the course of history. Jesus Christ is the one who changes the course of history. You prioritize him.

He'll take care of things. Amen.

And then let me give you a final one. If you pause long enough for God to speak to you and receive his cleansing, and you have joyful celebration, you should come in when you arrive at church. You should be so fired up to come give God praise for everything that's going on in your life. And I'm not talking about, like, I had a tough week. I was diagnosed with a sick.

I had a tough week. I can't even. I had a tough week financially. I get it. There's always things in this world that are super challenging, overwhelming, and all those things, Paul calls them light and momentary afflictions, and they're not worthy of being compared to the glories that are about ready to be revealed to us.

And if you understand that and you come celebrating what you actually have, it diminishes what you don't and then you take a willing pause or a fresh pause or a necessary pause. It will also encourage this final one. A willing consecration of allegiance and separation. A willing consecration of allegiance and separation. Notice

this last verse, verse 47.

So all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah gave portions to the singers and the gatekeepers, as each day required, and set apart the consecrated portion for the Levites. And the Levites set apart the consecrated portion for the sons of Aaron. Because for Israel, the way that it worked is the tithe went to the temple so that those who were serving the house of God could be paid. That was their responsibility. That's what they did.

And the people of the nation were like, we need more of this, not less. We're gonna be generous so we don't forget that priority is God. We're gonna make sure they have everything they need to do, everything that God's called them to do. But notice this, they set apart the consecrated portion. Consecrate means to be set apart.

When it comes to your walk with Jesus, if you take a necessary pause, he will show you what it looks like for you to be set apart. We're called to be set apart. We're called to live holy. It means you're called as a Christian to look different, act different

and think different. If you're conformed to the image of Christ, you will look different, act different and think different.

And you need to be willing to do that. I mean, romans twelve two tells us how we can do that. Romans twelve two says it like, do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Listen, if you're listening and following what 90% to 95% of our population is saying, you can almost bank on the fact you're wrong. Bank on it.

What do you listen to? What do you look at? What do you watch? Who are you following? If you look like everybody else, chances are you're wrong.

I remember back in college, I had become a Christian right before I went off to college, brand new baby believer. Not really knowing how to walk it out, not even knowing I was supposed to walk it out, just thinking, I'm saved and this is good. And I had a real hard time walking it out and began to pray that God would bring people into my life. And he did. And one of the guys he brought into my life was a leader from a

ministry.

And he began to challenge me and said, why are you living in your fraternity? Why don't you just move out? And I said, cause I'm having fun. And he said, well, what? How many guys?

We had about 90 guys living in our house. He goes, how many of these guys are christians? I said, I don't know, probably three or four. And he's like, well, then why are you living here? I'm like, well, I'm like an evangelist.

And he said, okay. He goes, how many of these guys have you led to the Lord? I'm like, well, zero. He's like, well, move out. I'm like, I don't want to move out to some junky apartment away from my friends just because I'm a Christian.

It just seems weird to me. But he said, would you pray about it? I said, yeah, I'll pray about it. That was a mistake. So I began to pray.

I'm like, lord, if you have a plan for me other than living here, you're going to need to show me. But I don't want to live in some junky place and all this kind of stuff. Well, it wasn't a week later I was over at this guy's apartment, and he walked me down to the first floor and introduced me to his friend and told me his friend was moving from champaign, Illinois, out here to Colorado Springs to be part of the national team for campus crusade for Christ. And as I'm listening to them talk, the friend said to my friend, he goes, hey, would you just pray for me? And I'm looking around this apartment.

I'm like, now, this is the kind of apartment I could be in. This was a remodeled old school. It was brick wall, 17 high foot ceiling, ten imprints. I mean, it was really nice. And as I'm thinking these thoughts, I'm overhearing the conversation.

He goes, hey, would you just pray for me and my wife? He goes, we need somebody to sublet this apartment in about the next two weeks, and we can't find anybody that will take this and just pray that God would raise up somebody that would want to come have this apartment. And so I inserted myself into the conversation, and

I said, well, how much is this? And he told me the price, and it was less than what I was paying at the fraternity. And I said, it's mine.

I'll buy it. And I got a friend, and we moved in. And you know what ended up happening on Friday and Saturday nights. Instead of rolling out with all my friends and doing what we used to do, I would stay home with him, and we would read the Bible, and we would study the Bible, and we started growing in Christ. Now all my friends are calling me saying, you coming out?

You coming out? I'm like, no. They're like, what are you doing? I'm reading the Bible. We're studying.

You want to come over? No, but do you know what happened when I started to distance myself? That's when I led about 30 of those guys to the Lord Jesus Christ, because I wasn't living the same as how they had lived.

Sometimes ministry is relationships, relationship with God, relationship with

others. But sometimes we think, well, I just got to hang out with sinners. I got to hang out. No, you don't. Don't hang out with sinners.

Like, what do you have in common with them? The only reason you should ever hang out with them is to share the gospel with them or if they're family and you have to, that's it. Your number one group of friends should be Christians. You're like, where am I going to find some of those churches? Because in the church, that's why we have different skin colors and different backgrounds and different political convictions and different all these things.

But the one thing we have we can center on is the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's what makes us special. And when we have that group of people speaking into us, that's when we're different. When you take time to pause, God can speak to you about you, of what it looks like to be different. And when you look different, you won't look the same.

People will think, man, that's weird. That's really weird that you're going to school your kids that way. That's really weird. You're going to spend your money that way.

That's really weird.

You spend your time that way. That's really weird that you do. You should look weird. Christianity is different. And then it involves allegiance.

That means going all in. It means that God is paramount. It means people see it in your life. I mean, in hyperbole, the way I would say it is, when you sneeze, you should sneeze, Jesus. I mean, people should see it in you in your own way, with your own personality, with your own temperament, in who you are.

They should see it in you. Why? Because going all in is not optional. Sometimes we think, well, I got saved, but I'm not ready to make him my Lord yet, and I'm not ready to go all in. Like, what bible are you reading?

Jesus said, if anyone would come after me, if anyone's going to be my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Like, if you're going to be my

disciple, you need to be willing to die for me. So come die. Let's go do this. And some people are like, I'm not in for that kind of commitment.

He was like, that's fine, I love you too, but I want all in. I don't want half hearted. And if you look at his disciples, why did he pick the twelve? Because they went all in. There's nothing special about the twelve other than their allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why did he pick you? Nothing special about you. Why did he pick me? Nothing special about me. What did he want?

Our full allegiance to him. Come what may. I belong to him. Come what may. I speak for him.

Come what may. I do what he wants me to do, come what may. Cause I'm all in with Jesus. So go all in. That's what it looks like to willingly consecrate yourself.

I'm willing to consecrate myself. I'm set apart. I'm going all in, and then I'm distancing myself. I used to be that. I was that, but now I'm not anymore.

I'm distancing myself from sin. I'm distancing myself from temptation because I know no temptation sees me except what's common to man. I'm distancing myself from worldly thinking and the songs I used to listen to and the news I used to listen to and the headlines I used to read and the conversations I used to have, I'm distancing myself from different relationships that aren't all in with Jesus. I mean, Jesus had some very, very harsh things to his followers in Luke chapter 14 and verse 26. I mean, let this sink in.

In Luke 14:26, here's what he said. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Did you get that? Well, what does that mean, Jiz? It means you better love me

more than yourself or anybody else in this world. Anybody who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of heaven. But, Lord, can I go bury my father?

Let the dead bury their own dead. You come, follow me. I want you all in. That's what he's looking for. That's what God's looking for for you.

He wants you to be set apart, totally going all in with him, distancing yourself, and you're not going to do it perfectly. I don't do it perfectly, but you need to do it increasingly, and you won't even know what those things are unless you pause long enough to let the Lord speak to you about you. Otherwise, Christianity just becomes a list of to do's and then you go through them. I did my Bible study, I did my prayer time. I did my church service.

I did this because we falsely believe that gathering in a place like this, all we care about is the songs and the sermon, and then we just go on our merry way. If you leave the same as you walked in, you missed all that God had for you. What's he calling you to change? What's he calling you to stop? What's he calling you?

Hey, pause and think about this just a little bit longer. This is what I have for you. Have you ever noticed that when you pause long enough and God's trying to get your attention, it doesn't matter where in the word you're reading, whether it's old Testament or new, he's saying the same thing. Well, I don't want to hear that he flipped like four books over. It's like, man, I don't want to hear that he flipped four.

He just keeps speaking about it. Whatever. He's trying to get your attention with his living and active word will get your attention because he wants to know, can you hear me? Are you going to do anything with it? And many of us are not experiencing a fresh encounter with Jesus because for years God's been telling you what to do, how to do it, and we're like, I don't want to do that.

I'll wait for the big thing. Every little step is the big thing. Every little step is the big thing. And oh, how I wish I could tell you now that I'm more seasoned with the Lord, which I think I am after walking with him for 35 years. And now that I'm more seasoned, he doesn't really get after me as much anymore.

I would say he does more. I would say when I pause to hear him long enough, my heart's more sensitive to what he wants to say. My heart's more sensitive to the direction he wants to take. My heart's more sensitive to what he might do. I have a greater repudiation for what my past used to be.

I have a greater hunger for what's to come. So that's why when people ask me like, how can I pray for you? Pray that I'll take necessary pauses to spend time at the feet of Jesus. That's the best thing I can do for me, for my family, and for our church. The best thing you can do in your walk with Jesus Christ is take necessary pauses.

And if you're asking the question, well, for how long, you missed the whole sermon. Long enough so that you fall more in love with Jesus. And I promise you, when you set aside time to do that, I promise you it's going to be met with every sort of distraction you can possibly have. When you do, don't give up. Don't say, well, it doesn't work for me.

Just go back at it. I find to this day, when I sit down to pray in the morning or read or do whatever, it takes a while for me to unveil my thoughts and my heart and all the different things so that I can hear them clearly because I got all these things going on and all these thoughts happening and what's going on with my kids and what's going on with my day. And if I just sit down and, okay, what do you got? Let me read this. It doesn't work for me.

I gotta sit and sometimes write and sometimes think and sometimes pray and sometimes pause and sometimes get up and get a drink of water and then come back and. Because the enemy wants to distract me from doing one thing, and that's spending time with Jesus. He doesn't want you to spend time with Jesus. Let me tell you what Jesus wants more than anything. He wants to spend time with you.

He wants to show you about you. He wants you to know how much he loves you, how much he cares for you, and how much he wants a relationship with you. And I would be here to tell you this. If on this father's day, you've never given your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I got good news for you. No matter who you are, he's not asking you to jump through hoops and get religion.

He's asking you to give your life to him. If you're tired of living your life on your own and you're sick and tired of your sin, and you're like, I want to turn from that. I need to cross different. I want Christ in my life. I need him in my life.

I need my sin forgiven. There's no way I can do it. I got good news for you. He wants to forgive you right now. He wants to welcome you into the family of God, and he wants to walk with you for the rest of your days.

That's who he is. Now, we sing a song in this church a lot, called God of revival. And sometimes when we sing that song, we think, oh, it's out there. It's all those people out there in Denver. It's like they need it.

And they do know what the song's about. It's about me and you. That God would revive our hearts. Cause the reality is of his church around this city. And I'm not just talking about brave.

I'm talking about all the church that truly loves Jesus. Got our act together and said, Jesus, whatever you want. We just want to be generous to you. We want to love you. We want to pause.

We want to live holy. We want to live lives that are set apart for you. Do whatever you want. We would be blown away by what God can do and all the things you read about. How come we haven't seen that?

The only thing that stops the move of God is us when we say by our actions don't really want them. God, I'd love you to give us revival. How much time you spent with God this week? Well, I didn't. I was too busy.

But I want revival. No, you don't. You want revival. When you position yourself before the Lord, when you're joyous before the Lord, when you're thankful before the Lord, when you're repentant before the Lord, when you're confessing before the Lord, when you have an ongoing relationship before the Lord, when you say, not me, Lord, not me. But you.

You do whatever you want as long as you get glory. I'm good with that. That's what he wants. He wants to revive my heart. He wants to revive your heart.

He wants to use us for great things, but not because we have anything to offer, but because he does through us. Amen. Isn't that good news? Would you stand with me, Father in heaven? Would we this week take necessary time to pause before you, to worship you, to sing to you, to praise you, to celebrate you, to hear you, to let you speak to us about what we look at and see and taste and touch and talk about and hear.

Lord, transform us and conform us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, grow us increasingly until we meet you face to face. And, Lord, let us yearn for the day we see you revive our hearts. This day, Lord, we give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise in Jesus name. Amen and amen.

Could we give God praise for who he is?

