

How Are Political & Social Wars Really Worship Wars?

- [Narrator] Nehemiah Chapter 1. The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah. "Now what happened in the month of Chislev, in the 20th year, as I was in Susa the Citadel, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, 'The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.' As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, 'O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love for those who love him and keep his commandments.'" "Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We've acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'" "They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. Now I was cupbearer to the king."

- All right, you ready to jump into a brand new book of the Bible? If you've got your Bible, find, it's a book in the Old Testament called Nehemiah, some of you may be familiar with it, most of you are not, we're gonna spend 13 weeks going through it, as you find your place in Nehemiah, last week here at Trinity, we looked back at God's faithfulness for, in, and through you wonderful people, for six years, we had a great celebration, this week we're starting to look forward, what does God have for us next? As the people we're gonna take our cues and clues from the great book of Nehemiah, let me set it up for you. They are dealing with some cultural, spiritual, economic, practical circumstances that will sound very, very familiar, I believe that God's Word is timeless, but this particular book is incredibly timely. Here's what they're dealing with, tell me if this sounds at all familiar, number one, they had a godless, corrupt, overbearing government that God's people were unhappy with, can I get an amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- All right, so they were frustrated, they're living under the rule of the Persian empire, these people don't know God, they don't love God, they don't serve God, and they're creating policies that make it hard for God's people to enjoy faith, freedom and family, in addition, they were in the middle of an economic downturn and decline, supply line was jacked up post-COVID, they had a hard time making ends meet, the government was just minting money and raising debt,

squeezing the middle class and the families who were filling an inflation pinch, can I get an amen?

- [Congregation] Amen. All right, we've only begun, number three, the culture was against them, corrupt, hostile, indoctrinating their children, terrible entertainment, bad options, God's people were inundated all the time, everything from what they saw on their phone to every single aisle at Target was against them, can I get in amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- In addition, the media had set a negative narrative against their faith, every time a leader said or did anything, they were publicly attacked, you're gonna see PR statements for Nehemiah sent out repeatedly, just attacking him by enemies and critics weaponizing the media to create fake news and a negative narrative, does that sound familiar?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Amen, all right. And so the result was there were exiles, many of God's people had scattered, they were living in horrible cities that were difficult to worship God and raise your kids and be normal, and so they were moving and scattering and fleeing, trying to find a place that they could establish as their new home, haha, welcome to Arizona. Can I get a

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Amen. And then the problem was though, the church was not faring well, much of the church had become apostate, teaching was compromised, leaders were corrupted, and there was just this epidemic of wokeism where they had embraced this Persian, horrible, godless, demonic agenda, can I get a

- [Congregation] Amen

- Amen, and so, here's the good news, there was a small group of people that still did love and serve the Lord, they're gonna be called today the remnant, they are a small group that realizes this isn't going well, we are outnumbered and surrounded, we do love the Lord, but it is difficult for us to exercise our faith. It is difficult for us to lead our family, because everything and everyone is against our freedom. And so what they really need is a leader with a plan who loves and cares for them. The government, the media, the economy is not going to care for God's people, so Nehemiah will, before we get into the message and the man, let me just say, there was one other cultural detail as you read Nehemiah, that doesn't have anything to do with us today, but it is a significant part of the storyline, and that is that they did not have a wall on their border, so they could not secure their culture from invasion. I'll just say this, somebody send a copy of Nehemiah to 1,600 Pennsylvania Avenue, it's a book about why we need to build a wall, otherwise people can't live there, us who are in Arizona said.

- [Congregation] Amen,

- Amen, all right, that being said, I know that Nehemiah has nothing to do with us, we're still gonna study this great book of the Bible. And so what I want to deal with first is I want to deal with the message of Nehemiah, let me explain the book, and we're gonna be in it for some weeks, it's 13 chapters, we'll cover a chapter a week, nice and simple, so just be reading ahead and preparing yourself. You can read two chapters a day and basically get through the book every single week through the course of the series. It's one of the final sections written in the Old Testament before the coming of Jesus, and in addition, in the Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah are one book, in the Christian Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah have the same content, but they're two books, so if you want to go kind of bonus round next level, in addition to looking at Nehemiah, be reading Ezra, they work at the same time, on the same project, like a left hand and a right hand, they compliment one another as leaders. And what happens is, Nehemiah does a lot of the practical, Ezra does a lot of the Spiritual, Nehemiah does a lot of the private work behind the scenes, Ezra does a lot of the public work, preaching and teaching and leading God's people. What Nehemiah does is he builds, and then what God uses Ezra for is fills, and they work together, and so in this, it's really important, both are Godly men, but what you'll see with Nehemiah, it's a lot more working with the city, and the county, and building permits, and getting supply chain issues, and lumber, and scheduling architects, and a lot of practical, Ezra, he gets up, he leads, he preaches, he teaches, he comes with the band, he preaches sermons, and then he has his life group leaders meet with people to answer their questions, he leads the ministry. This is how God often works, he builds, and then he fills. So God created the world and then filled it with people, God created us and then filled us with the Holy Spirit, God's going to rebuild the walls in the city of Jerusalem and the temple, then fill it with people, and fill it with his presence so that God's people could be in God's presence. And as you read the great book of Nehemiah, encouraging you to do so, a lot of the book is simply Nehemiah's personal journal entries. So chapters one through seven are literally pages from his journal, chapter 13 is a page from his journal. You're gonna see him pray, fast, and journal, he's a profoundly Spiritual man, even though he is doing what doesn't look like overtly spiritual work, he's doing construction projects, he's doing security detail, he's doing budget forecasting, and all of this is by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a lot of how he feels and processes is recorded and reported in his journal, and it's perfect, that's why the Holy Spirit includes it in the Scripture. So what I would encourage you to do, in this time of Nehemiah, how's your prayer life? We're gonna talk about that in a moment, fasting, and we're gonna talk about that through Nehemiah, and as Americans, we don't know much about fasting from food, what we are familiar with is fast food, that's what we are familiar with, fasting from, from food will be a new one, and journaling, and this is my journal, so I wanted to share personally a little bit on journaling. And what he's gonna do is he's gonna pray and plan, and what he does is he journals out his prayers and his planning. And so for me, this is my journal, Grace bought this for me, I've got two notebooks in here, the first one is just for my family, 'cause my family literally is my first priority. And so in here are sections for Grace, each of our five kids, those who are married, for their spouses, things I'm praying for them about, things I need to follow up on, check in on, when I have lunch, or

meeting, or family dinner with them, things I just wanna let them know, things I want to ask them about, prayer requests, and people come up to me, hey, could you pray for this or that? Occasionally there's things in here as well for our church family, the second notebook is for Trinity Church and Real Faith Ministries, this is things I'm praying about, things I'm learning, Scripture verses that come to mind as I'm reading books, things that jump out to me, as I'm meeting with leaders, things that God is teaching me, and what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to capture everything that God is giving me, 'cause here's what my experience is with God, I usually don't get everything at once, I get it a bit at a time, so I need a place to collect it. So in here I've got plans for Grace and I to go on vacations and adventures and things to look forward to and to be praying about, and to be planning for, this then turns into budgets, and schedules, and routines, and details. I'm 51, so this is my backup brain, but also, what I find is if I think something, I forget it, but if I write it down, it sticks. How many of you, that's your experience? And I don't put it on my phone, 'cause it's gonna get hacked, and I don't need the Chinese to know what I'm praying about, so I write it in a notebook, I write it in a notebook, and I write it down and I keep it, and this is always with me, as you're going through Nehemiah, you're gonna be peering into his journal. In addition, we've got for you as we study Nehemiah, a study guide, and it's about 100 pages, it's a introduction and overview to the book, it's a summary and commentary on every chapter, there are discussion questions for your life group, please join one, there is also personal questions for you to study individually with your spouse, with your kids, and low and behold, you're very, very welcome, we have left blank pages in here for you to journal what you're learning, so if you're at church, you're like, hey, I learnt something, or in life group, or reading, or praying, collect everything you learn about Nehemiah in one place, and I like to do this for books of the Bible, when we finish it, you can keep it in your home or office, and then we'll do the next book or series, just think over the course of many years, that you'll be collecting commentary and also your own personal learnings and insights on God's Word, and we would encourage you to do so. So that's Nehemiah the message, Nehemiah the mission, here's the big idea, God blesses his people to bless other people, God blesses us to be a blessing. God doesn't just bless us to enjoy the blessing, but to then be the blessing and to share the blessing. The problem in Nehemiah is this, God had blessed his people, but they weren't blessing other people. God had been good to them, but it hadn't flowed through them to others. So they're not being generous, they're not sharing hope in God, they're not sharing Bible teaching, they're enjoying everything that God provides, but they're not sharing everything God provides, they'd become very selfish. As a result, they grew very entitled, they had lived under God's blessing and provision for so long, they're like, well we're always safe, 'cause God protects us, we're always wealthy and affluent, and everything is up into the right for us, because God always provides for us. What can happen is some people live under God's blessing and they no longer see it as God's blessing for them, they just think that's normal life, and it's not, it's not normal life, it's supernatural life. And I would submit to you that this decline and decay cycle in Israel is something similar to what we're experiencing in America. Peace, prosperity, freedom, and then a bunch of people become lazy, self-indulgent, and entitled, no longer making sacrifices for God or for the good of others, and the result is that God sent a succession of prophets to warn his people in the days of Nehemiah, hey, I love you, I care about you, I'm blessing you, but what you are are doing is unacceptable in my sight. They weren't

worshiping God, they weren't giving to God, they were not serving God, they were not sharing God's love with others, they were not pointing others to the Lord Jesus. So I've got it in the notebook and the study guide, but like Isaiah and Jeremiah, there are a series of prophecies where God is warning them, hey, I'm being patient here, but at some point my patience will come to an end and judgment of justice will begin. God's very patient, his wick burns very slowly, but it does reach its end. Sometimes people live in rebellion against God and still say that they believe in God, they think, well, God must be fine with me, he's not changed any of his behavior toward me, and then all of a sudden, everything changes in one day, and God removes his hand of blessing and anointing. He does that in the days of Daniel, we looked at Daniel a few years ago, and the judgment and the justice, and the destroying of their nation and their church, the temple, happened in the days of Daniel. They were invaded, they were overtaken, they were enslaved. And we read of this in 2 Kings 25:8-10, "In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, the 19th year of king Nebuchadnezzar," he's the guy featured in the book of Daniel, king of Babylon, so they're being invaded by sort of the combination of the Babylonian and Persian empires, says, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, is serving to the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem, and he burned the house of the Lord, they burned the temple to the ground. This is where God's people come in God's presence to sing God's praises, but guess what? They didn't care about God, they had a sort of religious fakery. In Arizona, this is a church that has a country club mindset, it's always there for me, and it looks pretty, and I don't really care, and I'm not really devoted to God, and I don't really make sacrifices, and I'm kind of indifferent, but I like to sort of pretend and play a bit of religion, I like to look like a good moral citizen, and so I like that building to be there just in case I ever wanna show up, so then people will think that I'm a pious person, because I've come to a holy place. God says, if you're not gonna actually worship me, then I'll let the entire building be burned to the ground. This would be the equivalent in our day of all the churches in our city being burned to the ground in one week or two, just burned to the ground, God's people are like, oh my gosh, and God's like, you weren't worshiping me anyway, so let's just stop pretending. Let's just stop pretending, God doesn't like to play church, he doesn't like to play church, and eventually he tells them, you can't play church anymore, I'm gonna let the church get burned down. It goes on to say, and all the houses of Jerusalem, every great house he burned down, and all the army of the Chaldeans are with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. They burn the church to the ground, they burn the houses of the leaders to the ground, they rip the wooden gates off of the walls, now you can't fortify the city, and they destroy the walls, and then they leave. The result is this affects a place and a people. The place we are told has great trouble, it's a strong word in the Hebrew, it means it's unlivable, you can't live there, it was once beautiful and it was safe, and now it is destroyed, and it is embarrassing. This is what we're seeing right now in some major cities as happened in this city. Just a complete deterioration, very quickly, that's why many of you have moved, the Bible would call you exiles, we'd call you, you know, neighbors, welcome, we're glad to have you. But I lived in one of these cities with my kids, and this was many years ago, and things have gotten much worse, but my kids wanted to go to the park near our house, so they got on their bikes and they were little at the time, and we go to the park and they're like, "Dad, can we play on the swing set, you know, with the monkey bars?" I was like, "No, because guys have put their tents over it and that's where they're living." And I could see

the beer bottles, and the drug needles, and the condoms from here, that's not for kids anymore. "Well, dad, could we go play over here in the field?" Actually again, there's needles and condoms, so no, we can't run around there and throw the ball around. There was a wood path that went through a wooded area, dad could we go for a hike or walk? Okay, we start in, I wouldn't even tell you what men were doing in the bushes, it's like, kids we're going home. Can't send you to the local school, you're gonna get brainwashed, can't take you to the park, it's for drug addicts, and meth heads, and alcoholics who, you know, they need Jesus and they need help, but all of a sudden, it's an unlivable place to be. And if you're a believer, you don't want your kids to be in this environment. And people don't think that way, 'cause they're not having kids. So they're not thinking about creating a culture, an environment, a city, a neighborhood that is for kids, 'cause they don't have kids. And if you do, you're trying to figure out how to make this work, that was exactly the spirit of what was happening there. In addition to the place, the people had shame, they were embarrassed, they're like, look at our once great city, look at our once great church, look at our once great culture, look at our once great nation, what a total disaster, what a free fall collapse. Sound familiar? Yeah, that's what they're feeling, it's what many of you are feeling. And all of this was the result of apostasy. They profess a faith that they did not practice, they had lip service, but not a lifestyle, as you get into the book of Nehemiah, you'll see, they're also worshiping foreign gods, they don't really care about God, they've stopped giving, praying, trying, and caring, and God gets particularly upset and frustrated with the men, because they're not loving and leading, they're marrying unbelieving women, they're raising unbelieving children, and they're letting kids just be raised by the culture and the government that was against God. So Nehemiah is gonna pour out a lot of his frustration on the men, because if you get the men, you win the war, if you lose the men, you lose the war, the thing really is you better get the men activated for God, otherwise everything is going to decline very quickly, apostasy was in mass in their day. There were far more people who were apostate than part of the remnant, the remnant were of those minority faithful few who did love and serve God, but the majority who professed faith, did not practice it, and likely did not possess it. You need to know in our day we are in the midst of a massive generational apostasy. Pew research came out with a study this week and said, until recently, upwards of 90% of Americans were Christian, and now that is in decline. Do you think, just look at America, does it look like 90% are filled with the Spirit, obey in the Bible, and following Jesus? No, it doesn't look like that, okay. And what we're seeing is a mass generational apostasy where even churches don't believe the Bible. Where even churches aren't going to adhere to biblical categories, there is God and Satan, there is heaven and hell, there is right and wrong, there is truth and lies, there are male and female, there are some things that are fixed. And we see this, I mean, any church, I'm not gonna attack pastors and organizations, but I will attack ideas, if you're flying a rainbow flag, you've come out of Satan's closet, that's what your pastor has done. You know, we saw this during the whole social justice woke movement of the past few years, all of a sudden it's like, well, the Christians believe the same thing as the non-Christians. And the point is that God's people are supposed to be a countercultural remnant, we are supposed to be the weirdos, and the outliers, and the oddballs, we're supposed to believe in what the Bible says, and we are to lovingly, graciously stand against the cultural current of the world and the culture, saying that is not the right way, that is not God's way, we invite you to a better way under the authority of God

and his Word. And when God's people don't believe the Bible, and God's people don't teach the Bible, and God's people don't agree with God, that's called apostasy. Apostasy is what was happening in the days of Nehemiah, it's why they were overtaken, it's why they were destroyed, it's why everything went south so painfully and so suddenly, and apostasy is a word that's taken from the military, and that is when you are part of a military fighting unit, and you go out to defend your king and your kingdom, and then you commit treason, and you join the enemy, and you start shooting your own army, that's treason in the military, it's apostasy in God's Spiritual army. Like you're supposed to represent King Jesus in the Kingdom of God. And then you start shooting those who believe the Bible or the Bible itself, and what you're actually doing, you're doing the work of Judas, you're fighting against the team you're supposed to be on. What you have in the days of Nehemiah, as I would submit in our day, is largely similar. It is God and government, and the government doesn't want God's people to be free, because what the governments always wants is total control. At this point, they're under the oversight and the rule of the Persian Babylonian people, it was a hybrid people group at that time, and ultimately, the government didn't want church to be open, didn't want God's people to be free, didn't want them to live according to their convictions. And God's people rather than honoring God, they sided with the government, and they submitted and surrendered to the government, they didn't serve God. Well, the result is judgment, the result is judgment. So here's the big idea, Nehemiah is in Susa, that's the capital city of Persia, he gets a report on what is happening in Jerusalem, that is supposed to be the city of God, and it says that he is devastated, heartbroken, he is emotionally crushed, and he spends three to four months just broken in prayer, fasting, weeping, seeking God's heart. Couple of questions, number one, what have you become numb to? Here's the crazy fact that changes our entire understanding of the story of Nehemiah, how long had Jerusalem been destroyed? 141 years, why does Nehemiah get so emotional when he hears about it? Not because he has new information, but because he has new perspective. All of a sudden he sees as God sees. We can get so, we're born into a world where things were there before us, so they seem normal to us, things had been this way for so long that we can't think of any other way that things might be. Imagine if you took Nehemiah and you just put him in your car and drove him home from church today, if he started asking questions, well, what's that? Well, that's where we pay women to take their clothes off. You just drive by that, doesn't that bother you? I guess it probably should. Well, what's that? That's where, when we don't want the children, we terminate their life. What you, does that not bother you? I guess it probably should. Well, what's that? That's a church, what's flying on it? A rainbow flag, what does that mean? They hate the Bible. Oh, well shouldn't we take the name church off it, call it something else, or put another word on it like fake church? So at least the marketing, I mean, you and I drive by things all the time that if we saw it as God sees it, our heart would break as God's heart is broken. Like that's not right, that's not good, that doesn't help people, that hurts people. That's not freedom, that's bondage. Secondly, what breaks your heart? Hearing that church is closed, that worship of God is ceased, it breaks Nehemiah's heart. This breaks my heart, I mean, I'm a guy, I've never built the church building in my life, I'm not against it, no issues, but I just see all these great churches all over the world that God's people built and they made tremendous sacrifices for, and they're then grandfathered in these churches, meaning once it's no longer a church, developers buy it, tear it down, and church is gone forever. So many places you go like,

dead church, empty church, and what I'm talking about is church building. Just in deterioration, that's what their temple looked like, you're like, man, it's a dump, does nobody care? Like here we are, we're in Scottsdale, Arizona, down the street is Paradise Valley, we first got this building, it did not look like paradise. The point is, why does everybody care about their house, but people don't care about God's house? Why would they allow God's house to deteriorate to such a point that they would never tolerate that with their house? It troubles me, because God's people need a house, God doesn't need a house, but God's people need a house, and it breaks his heart. Now the good news here, it says that there is a remnant, meaning there's a lot of people who are apostate, a lot of people who really aren't walking the walk, but they maybe a little bit will talk the talk, but there is a remnant, there's a small group of people remaining who do love God, and they wanna see things change, but you know what they really need? A leader, true or false, this is still what we need, leadership, because right now, just in their day, they're like we have all these problems, okay, who's the leader to architect a solution? You can make excuses and you can blame others, but at some point a leader's gotta fix the problem. Our cultural crisis right now is obvious, the only thing that the left and the right can agree on is this ain't working. And so what we need from the White House to the outhouse, every level of society, we need leadership, and Nehemiah stands as an example of Godly, business savvy, politically wise leadership filled with the Holy Spirit, he's one of the great leaders in the Old Testament, he's up there with Moses and Joshua and Daniel, and he leads God's people. So let's talk a little bit about Nehemiah the man. We don't know much about his family, we get his dad and his brother's name, in chapter 2:5 it says that their burial chambers are back in Jerusalem, so they're probably a white collar affluent family, God is probably working through a guy who has good business connections, good business sense, good political connections and sense, because all of this is going to involve a lot of money and a lot of government favor. And it says that he is cupbearer to the king, that's the pregnant line in chapter 1:11 that ends the chapter and then sets up the rest of the book. What this means is, he's a Jew, a Hebrew, a worshiper of God, he's living in Persia in Susa, and he is serving not only King Darius, but he's also serving king Artaxerxes, godless, horrible, evil, demonic man, he's mentioned in the book of Esther, this king that is ruling over and that Nehemiah is serving under, he's such a brutal guy that he wasn't supposed to be the king, his brother was, so he murdered his brother so he could be king. His other brother tried to take the throne and he attacked and beat and overtook his brother, on a few occasions, there were coup attempts, and he was a murderous blood thirsty guy who put them down. There are at least in histories record, four Persian Kings that took the throne through assassination, and there were six more that took it through coups and political intrigue. So if you're the king, you're kind of paranoid. They don't have elections, this is like, you're the mob boss, and so they needed people closest to them who were most trustworthy, people in their cabinet that they could absolutely trust with their own life, that would've included this man, Nehemiah, cupbearer to the king, you think you got a bad job? Here's his job, everybody's trying to kill me, so you drink the wine first, and if you're alive, then I'll try it, that's his job. That's his job, he's got a very important job, because literally the life of the king is in his hand, plus the rest of the Royal family, plus the rest of the dignitaries who are visiting. Like, if someone comes in from another nation to meet with the king and they want him poisoned, now you've got literally an international incidence, so Nehemiah is one of the most trustworthy men

in the entire kingdom, he doesn't love their God, he doesn't believe in their religion, he's not a part of their nation, he's a slave that was taken hostage generations prior as a prisoner of war, but he's faithful, you know why? Because he doesn't just worship the king, he worships the King of kings, which allows him to be humble and godly toward the king. The big idea is this, it doesn't matter who you work for, you work for Jesus, that's who you work for, so like, but I don't like my boss, your boss is not that bad, like, I don't like my job, okay, he was probably castrated for the job, I mean, you think you got a bad job, imagine that's in your job description, you're like, yeah, I was noticing here, .6 castration, I'm sure that's a typo, they're like, no, that's what it means, oh, he didn't have a choice, he was taken as a slave, probably castrated and forced to serve a demonic, godless, foreign king. See, because if you were gonna be in the home, if you're gonna have access to the Royal family, and he's got a queen, and he's got princess daughters, and he's gotta harem, he needs to make sure that you are not doing anything you shouldn't be doing, and he's gonna guarantee you're not gonna do it. This is what they did to Daniel as well. How many of you, if you were a slave, castrated, you would not get a good performance review at your annual job review, amen? You're like, your attitude's bad, yep, terrible. I'm a castrated slave, I don't see it improving. And does he do a good job? Does a great job, because ultimately, whoever you work for, you work for Jesus. You don't just work for, the quote unquote king, you work for the King of kings, because he maintained his integrity, he earned trust that is then gonna open the door of opportunity, your character today opens your opportunities tomorrow. A lot of people are like, I don't know why I don't have any opportunities today, well, maybe you didn't have character yesterday, he doesn't know what God is gonna use him for, but he just does what is right, two things I wanna say before we move on, number one, I'll ask you a question, is he, and you're gonna see this in the rest of the book, is he a politically active believer? Yes, you're going to see him appeal to the king, you're going to see him get legal documents, and building permits, and security detail, and fundraising, and he is working through the governmental process. He is a politically active believer. So there's some of you like, God's people shouldn't be politically active, well, if you wanna continue to have faith, freedom, and family, you probably should be politically active. I mean, 'cause who's in charge determines what we can do or not do without getting in trouble with the government. He is a very politically active believer in a godless, foreign government, but number two, his highest allegiance is to Jesus Christ. The reason he wants to get Jerusalem secure and get the temple open, is because that's where God is going to come as Jesus Christ, the prophets have already said Jesus is gonna come to the temple in Jerusalem. That means we need to get Jerusalem set up, we need to get the temple set up, so that Jesus can go there. And the prophets in the Old Testament already said that Jesus would be God visiting our planet to deal with our sin problem, that he would live without sin, that he would die in Jerusalem, that he'd be buried in Jerusalem, that he'd raise in Jerusalem, that he conquers sin and death in Jerusalem, that he'd return to heaven, that he'd build a new Jerusalem, and that he'd come back and he'd replace the old Jerusalem with a new Jerusalem, Jerusalem's mentioned 1,000 times in the Bible, sometimes already called Zion, Nehemiah's like, we need to get this straight so we can get Jesus. So the big idea is this, be politically active, but have your highest allegiance to King Jesus. So that is the message, the mission, the man, here's the method, where does he start? When God breaks your heart, when there is a tremendous and profound need, where do you

start? Here's where he starts, prayer. You and I, here's where we start, we start on the internet, we start on social media. Don't bring your problems to the world, bring your problems to the Lord, before you bring your problems to the world. You need to meet with God before you meet with anybody else, you need to verbal process and pray, he's gonna take three or four months, and he's crying, he's weeping, he's fasting, he's journaling, he's frustrated, and he's trying to figure out how do I pray, get God's will, and then plan to do God's will? The theme of Nehemiah is gonna be, you gotta pray and plan, you gotta pray and plan. He's gonna start with prayer, then you're gonna see his plan, and many of us, we're stronger at one and weaker at the other, how many of you are the prayer people? Like, I trust the Lord, I sing, I pray, I fast, I just trust the Lord, I don't have a calendar, I trust the Lord, you know, I don't have a budget, I trust the Lord, I don't, what day is it Lord? You know, so then there are other people, you're the planners, you're like Excel, I've accepted in my heart, I like spreadsheets and graphs, I like budgets and timelines, okay, let me say this, you guys got married, good luck with that, you need each other. And in some ministries, they're all the prayers, and you're like, oh my gosh, they pray, they hug, they worship, they're intuitive, they're emotional, they follow the Spirit, and I'd love to go, but they forgot to pay the light bill and unlock the door, you know, and so on, and then in other ministries, it's all about the planning, you're like, oh, they have systems, and policies, and procedures, and budgets, and schedules, and it's dead. Nobody laughs, nobody hugs, there's no water slides, there's no squirt gun, that's how you know, like yeah, we believe in God, but not fun, not relationships, not joy, we never riff, we just stay to the script. The key is, you need to pray to get God's plan, and so what he's gonna do, he's gonna pray, but then the praying results in planning, and oftentimes the planners don't pray enough, and the prayers don't plan enough, can I get a amen? Okay, we'll talk about this more as we get into Nehemiah, but he starts with praying, gets God's vision, goes into planning, this is the first of nine prayers that he prays here in Nehemiah. And he prays for three or four months, there are some things you just gotta work out. Some things you can't rush, so here's what we're gonna do, we're gonna look at his prayer, first he starts with praise to God, in chapter 1:5, "O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant with steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments." He starts by praising God, let me say this, don't start with problems, start with praise. Don't start with problems, start with praise, because here's the good news, God isn't part of the problem. So when you praise, you're realizing, okay, God, you're not part of the problem, now I'm gonna bring you my problems, but first I need to praise you, because of all my problems, my God is not a problem. And if you are younger, let me say this, I love you, this will be a little bit of a course correction, you know far more about yourself than God, because what we're taught from an early age is that we're the center, not God is the center, therefore the most important thing is to discover who you are, and the truth is that is important, but it's sub secondary importance, primary importance is who is God. So we know a lot more about our personality than God's attributes. How many of you, you know your personality? How many of you are introvert, extrovert? You're like, I don't know that, what's the other one where they give you a number? Enneagram, I don't know what number I am, I just know I'm the same number as Jesus, I don't really understand the Enneagram, but that's me, whatever Jesus is, that's me. Okay, and then, your personality, like took the Taylor Johnson, I'm a E-N-T-P, I'm a J-E-R-K, I'm a, you know, I'm a L-O-S-E-R, M-O-U-S-E, that's who I am. And so what happens is many of

you, you're like, what's my personality, well, that's great, but what's his personality? Who is God? Because ultimately at the end of the day, if you start with praise, here's what you're suddenly doing, you're thinking about God, and let me say most of the time we're thinking about us. So he says that God, here are God's attributes, here's God's personality, O Lord, highest authority, God of heaven, rules overall, great, super powerful, awesome, keeps covenant, when he makes a promise, he's good for it, steadfast love, you can depend on him. And then he talks about repenting of sin, is the second point, verses 6-7, chapter one, Let your ear be attentive, and your eyes open to the prayers of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel, your servants, confessing the sins, there's the word, of the people of Israel, which we have sinned, there it is again, even I in my father's house have sinned, third time, we have acted very corruptly, another word for sin, against you, and have not kept the commandments, which is the definition of sin, the statutes and rules that you commanded your servant Moses, here's what Nehemiah says, we're not victims, we're villains. You and I live in a world where nobody's a victim, but everybody's a villain. Do you know what they said, you know what they did, you know how that makes me feel? Well, what did you do? I'm a victim, no, if you're only and always a victim and never a villain, then you're Jesus. You're the innocent one being crucified by all the ungodly. Let me just tell you this, if you read the Bible, you're like, I read it, I looked at Jesus, man, he reminds me of me, you gotta read it again, okay, you missed some things. And ultimately, by repenting, what we're saying is, my beliefs and my behaviors disagree with God, and he mentions here the Word of God through the law of Moses, so how do we check our beliefs and behaviors? We check them by the Word of God. And when we deviate in belief or behavior from the Word of God, the Bible calls that sin, it's rebellion, it's cosmic treason, it's wrong. And here's the big idea, God doesn't bless people, he blesses people who place themselves under his Word. It says here that he is faithful to those who are in covenant with him, God is not faithful just to an individual, he's faithful to covenant relationships, and if you maintain covenant with him, he's going to bless you and be faithful to you. Give you an example, a lot of people would wonder, why does God not bless me? And God does bless, but I was thinking about it, how many of you are new to Arizona? Anybody new to Arizona? We talk about the exiles, welcome, okay, welcome. So how many of you have been for a while, let's just serve these new guests of ours, how many of you have tried to plant something in Arizona? You tried to plant something, how did it go? Not good, for the same reason, if you try to plant flowers in an oven while it's on, it doesn't go well, it's not a great environment. So what we did at our house, maybe you did this at your house, we put in a drip line, and a drip line just strategically determines where resources will be allocated, guess what? My house has a yard that has lush, beautiful greenery, but only in one place, near the drip line. If we try and plant away from the drip line, it's not gonna go well, here's what I'm telling you, God's Word is the drip line. God's Word is the drip line, if you want life, plant your life near God's Word, that's where the life giving water the Holy Spirit comes from, that's where God's blessing pours out. People are like, well, I planted my dating relationship far away from the drip line, why is it withering? Well, my marriage, you know, we don't pray and worship God, why is it not flourishing? We didn't pray with our kids and, you know, include them in a community of God's people, why are they not blossoming? My business has nothing to do with God, why is it not exploding? And it's just, well, plant everything near the drip line, see if it gets better, and repentance is this, God, there's

whole parts of my life that are not close to you, there are beliefs and behaviors that are disobedient, not obedient, and the reason that their culture is withering and dying and struggling is 'cause they planted everything from their money, to their ministry, to their marriage, far away from the drip line of God's Word, and repentance is were coming back. Thirdly, he agrees with God, and God's promises, says in verses 8-9, remember the word that you commanded to your servant Moses? He's like, okay, God, you said some stuff and I trust you, you are a God who keeps his promises, saying, "If you are unfaithful, I'll scatter you among the peoples." God, you told us if we rebel, it's gonna go bad, but if you return to me, that's repentance, come back to the Lord, and keep my commandments, obedience, and do them. "Though you're outcasts were in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place I have chosen to make my name dwell there." What I would encourage you to do, anytime you're reading God's Word, when you hear a promise, stop. Number one, ask, okay, is there any command here? Does it say I need to seek the Lord, I need to repent to the Lord, I need to trust the Lord, I need to sing to the Lord, is there any command here? Number two, God, what is your promise? Stop and pray, and just verbalize God's promise to you, God, you said you'll never leave me or forsake me, I claim that promise right now. God, you said that you would deal justly with my enemies, so now I release them to you. The way that God speaks to us is through his Word, the way that we speak to him is through prayer, and sometimes when we stop and agree with God's promises, that's one way of worshiping God. If you're having a hard time kickstarting your prayer life, start with praise, repent of sin, and then agree with God's promises, and then number four, yearn for God's blessing. Verses 10 and 11, "They are your servants and your people whom you redeemed by your great power, your strong hand. "O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayers of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." He's yearning, he's like, God, we have sinned, but it's not too late, God, we have done evil, but you can still do good, God, we have failed you, but you've never failed us, God, we have made this very difficult, but you can do the impossible. And he is yearning for God's blessing and God's provision. And what I love, two things here, number one, this word servant, he uses eight times in the prayer. Here's what he's saying, God, I'm here, whatever you want, I'm here, whatever you say, I'm here, whatever you ask. This is the key to things changing, is people start serving, in addition, what he is praying for is that the remnant would become a revival, that's what he's praying for. God, there's just a couple of us, but I'm here to serve you, I think there's some other people here that are willing to serve you, God, we praise you, ultimately God, we repent of our sin, we agree with your Word, and we're asking you to show up in power and take our remnant into a revival. This is the only hope for Western culture, this is the only hope for the United States of America, is that the remnant becomes a revival, that God prunes, and then there is a harvest. And if you continue to read Nehemiah, by the end, there's a revival, this is our hope, and a revival is where lots of people get saved, and people who are lukewarm become red hot for the Lord, where people who are just doing religion, all of a sudden come into a life changing relationship with Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we are somewhere in the middle, our church started as a remnant, there was a couple of us in the beat up old building, very similar, now things are going pretty good, and what we want to do is we want to just not study the book of Nehemiah, we wanna live the book of Nehemiah, we wanna

do what they did in the areas that God has called us. That brings me to the action item, which is the rebuilding home campaign. We're gonna take time and go through the book of Nehemiah, and we wanna follow in their example. So let me explain this, it's a two year capital campaign, you've gotta brochure, you should have got on the way in, you got it? I mean, pick it up, a tree gave it's life, this is vital. Just little one pager, nice and simple, here's the rebuilding home campaign, some of you know the story of the church, we'll share it again in just a moment. There was a great building here with a great ministry, and then it died, and then the building went into disrepair and decline, and it's the same story as Nehemiah, then a remnants showed up and started to work on it, and what we wanna do, we wanna finish rebuilding home. We're partway there, but we've got some ways to go. So here's what we're doing, we're doing a two year campaign, this can be a onetime gift or an ongoing series of gifts, and here's what I'm asking you to do, pray for our church and pray for yourself. Pray for our church, that God would lead us and guide us and provide for us as he always has, and pray for yourself, God, what's my part? Nehemiah here is praying, he's like, okay Lord, what do you want me to give? What do you want me to do? My family is doing this, Grace and I sent in a pledge yesterday, and I'm asking the Lord, in addition, can we give another pledge the following year? And I got confirmation on the way in that we're gonna do that, so the pledge that we gave is for the next 12 months, and then we're gonna give another pledge for the following 12 months, that's our part. And then plan, I'm gonna share the plan with you in a moment for Trinity, but then plan for your part of Trinity, God, where do you want me to serve? Where do you want me to give? What do you want me to do? And take this card with you, you can also visit trinitychurch.com/rebuildinghome, it's got all the details, our big commitment weekend is October 15th and 16th. As we get into the book of Nehemiah, you're gonna see that vision requires provision, so the people make a pledge, they actually have a commitment weekend, and then they bring all of their gifts. October 15th and 16th, you can either give your pledge online or bring it in. Here's the four things we're gonna do, phase one, we're gonna support local ministry partners, and we want to give first fruits to serve other ministries. And then we're gonna build a park, Lord willing, out front, so we got the backyard, and now we need the front yard. This will be a place of gathering, we could do worship events, prayer nights, overflow for men's, we don't even fit in this room anymore, we need a place to put guys, and some of 'em prayed about smoking cigars, so we're gonna do that outside. It's a holy incense that rises to the Lord. And so we're gonna need it as well for, a lot of people are getting married, we'd love to have weddings outside and or receptions, and it's a great gift to the community, so when they drive by, they see life and somebody cares. And so the good news is we've been working for a year to get the permit for the front yard, we got it on Thursday, it's taken a year, we finally got the permit. We've always paid cash for everything as we go, we paid down our mortgage by 40% in six years, we put 40% of all of our expenses to capital expenses and fixed assets, so thank you for being a generous church family, I know you're gonna do great, so I'm thanking you in advance, but we've been very good stewards and I'm very encouraged to share all the progress we've made. Phase two is to expand kids a little bit and to upgrade everything. We have said every month this year, recording kids every week, the last like six weeks, recording kids, last week, another record of around 500 kids under 10. How many of you are a mom, you're mom with a kid under 10? How many things do you pick up, clean, and throw away in the course of a

day? Imagine raising 500 kids, nervous eye twitch, pray for us, and so we just need to do some refresh on the kids' space, expand the backyard, make the most of that opportunity, because as the world loses its mind, we wanna be a loving, safe place for families, and especially for kids. Number three, we then are gonna improve broadcast, this will include replacing our power, which is 55 years old, and more broadcast capacity. Last year here from Trinity church, we reached over a hundred million people online through Real Faith, this year we're up for more than that. So as the world gets darker, we wanna send God's Word broader. We wanna get Bible teaching out to the nations, and just to encourage you, on a recent weekend when we had church, there were a few thousand people on campus, there were a few hundred thousand people on the live stream, so for every person you see, there's a hundred that are joining us, oftentimes, not just with the podcasts and the replay, but live online, so we want to increase the broadcast, and then also, number four would be Lord willing, pay off our entire mortgage, and be a debt free church that owns our property, that has complete freedom to do whatever we need to do in the will of God. And we're gonna do all of this Lord willing, in the next two years, right before the election, 'cause I dunno about you, I'm looking at the economy, I'm looking at the culture, I'm looking at politics, I'm like, we probably should get ourselves ready for the perch, so that's kind of where we're at. And so I've been praying for three or four months, and I'll close with this, as Nehemiah did, I'm not gonna stand before God and give an account for the globe, I'm not gonna stand before God and give an account for the United States of America, I'm not gonna stand before God and give an account for the state of Arizona, I care about all those things, but I am gonna stand before God and give an account for you. And I love you with all my heart, and I have decided, we have decided that we're all in, and this is what we're doing, other opportunities have come, we've turned them down, bigger buildings have been offered, we've told them no, other places have called, and we have said no, it says in 1 Peter 5, "Shepherd the flock that is among you." You are the flock, every flock needs a good pen, needs a loving shepherd, and a good, healthy diet. My hope and prayer and goal is to lead and to feed well, and as the world gets crazy and you have a hard time taking your kids, heck, to Disneyland or school, let's just be honest, you're afraid to turn on the TV or hand them a screen, as the world just continues to get darker, let's just let our home be a little brighter, let's let this be a place where men are built up to bless women and children, where women are encouraged and loved and safe, where children have fun and learn about Jesus, where lives and legacies keep getting transformed. And the heart of the rebuilding home campaign is this, you're a wonderful family, we've got a great Father, and it's time to finish the house, amen? Here's a little bit more. When it came time to start this church, I met with pastor Jimmy Evans, one of our apostolic overseers, and he said, "Mark, God's gonna give you a building, it's gonna be off the 101, it's gonna seat 800, it'll be a historical church, you'll be able to buy it, he laid out all of these details," I was like, "How do you know that?" He's like, "I don't know, I just feel like that's what I'm supposed to tell you." But we had a Easter service where we set up every chair, I was like, okay, how many chairs is it? 793, I was like, close, and then look in the sound booth, I kid you not, some of you know the story, there were seven seats in the sound booth, God promised us a building off the 101, historically designated that we could buy that would seat exactly 800, and everything that was said came to pass. The current home of Trinity Church was originally opened in 1966, and it was originally a drive-in church. The founding and senior pastor passed away, and then it went

into pretty significant disrepair by the time we occupied it.

- [Grace] Yeah, I remember we were praying as a family and you brought Gideon, our youngest son, to pray and ask the Lord if this would be the place for our future church family, and Gideon felt like the Lord was urging him that this would be where we'd have our church family.

- We started very simply with our family and a few hundred people showed up for the first informational meeting, we didn't have kids' ministry, we didn't have a band, we didn't have anything, we had a really gross building.

- Yeah.

- And sweaty work projects.

- [Grace] It felt like family pretty quickly, it was a miracle, really, around us there wasn't a lot to offer, but because we were doing it together, it really built community.

- The church was growing and then COVID hit, and so God spoke to me and said that the church is gonna close for a short bit, there'll be time to do renovations, time to do upgrades, technology, we'd need to get ready to do a lot more broadcast online, and so we literally ordered everything and scheduled and sequenced all the work in faith. And then boom, the governor's edict comes down, and literally the work parties and the items that we ordered were all slated to begin the next day, and so we didn't even miss a day. And then when we reopened, we exploded, and the church grew very quickly, and we believe that there's another season of surge coming, and so we want to finish the property to maximize the capacity so that we can then see more people come and more people come to meet Jesus, yeah, that's it. Well, what brings us to the rebuilding home capital campaign is just deciding that we're gonna drop anchor, and we just feel like it's time to finish the campus. And so that would be building a park out front, because we don't have much of a lobby, and then people can mix and mingle, and they can visit and have a place for people to just build relationships and connect.

- [Grace] And I think it'll have a lot of use, and we have great people, and we'd love to bring more people in to get to know our great people.

- Kids' ministry has exploded, in the last six or seven months, every month we've set another record for kids. In kids' ministry we want to teach the kids early on, you're not just a blessing, you're also here to be blessed.

- And the campaign will help some of that be more permanent back there.

- Yeah, we'll theme it, we'll bring it all together, that'll include some improvements in the classrooms, as well as outside, more space, more shade for parents.

- And really make it a place where the parents, they know their kids are safe, they know their kids are gonna have fun and learn about Jesus, an environment that's, you know, more up to date and best for their kids.

- The third major need would be broadcast, and that would be video booths, and also upgrading of power, we're on original power that's 50 years old, just some practical infrastructure, but the broadcast from here through Real Faith, we got Bible teaching out to more than a hundred million people from Trinity, and that's trending up into the right, and so part of that is using this as a broadcast location as well. The overall campaign is a total of \$4.6 million, and our hope is to raise that over two years. Of that, the first 10% is being given away to other churches and ministry partners. Our hope is to have the park built by the time we celebrate our seventh birthday in September, 2023. So what we're gonna ask you to do is the same thing that we're doing, and that is to pray and ask the Lord, what do you want me to give toward the rebuilding home campaign? That can be a one time gift, that can be ongoing series of gifts over the course of two years. Many people are asking, well, how much should I give? Well, that's a great question, you should ask him.

- Depending on the Lord.

- The story of Nehemiah is, it's basically the story of what happened here, there was a vibrant church, that original church then stopped meeting, and the building went into a decline cycle, and we want to finish rebuilding home and open it up, and we're asking the Lord to have the same kind of revival that they experienced in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. And that's why we're rebuilding home.