

How Can We Make the Boring Parts of Life Meaningful?

- [Narrator] Nehemiah, Chapter Three. Then Eliashib, the high priest, rose up with his brothers, the priests, and they built the sheep gate. They consecrated it and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the tower of hundred, as far as the tower of Hananel. And, next to him, the men of Jericho built. And, next to them, Zaccur, the son of Imri built. The sons of Hassenaah built the fish gate. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And, next to them, Meremoth, the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz repaired. And, next to them, Meshullam, the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel repaired. And, next to them, Zadok, the son of Baana repaired. And, next to them, the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord. Joiada, the son of Paseah and Meshullam, the son of Besodeiah, repaired the gate of Yeshanah. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And, next to them, repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, the seat of the governor of the province beyond the river. Next to them, Uzziel, the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths, repaired. Next to him, Hananiah, one of the perfumers repaired and they restored Jerusalem as far as the broad wall. Next to them, Rephaiah, the son of Hur, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired. Next to them, Jedaiah, the son of Harumaph repaired opposite his house. And, next to him, Hattush, the son of Hashabneiah, repaired. Malchijah, the son of Harim, and Hasshub, the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section of the tower of the ovens. Next to him, Shallum, the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters. Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the valley gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts and its bars and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the dung gate. Malchijah, the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth Haccherem, repaired the dung gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And Shallum, the son of Col-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the fountain gate. He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors, its bolts and its bars. And he built the wall of the pool of Shelah of the king's garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David. After him, Nehemiah, the son of Azbuk, ruler of half the district of Beth-Zur, repaired to a point opposite the tombs of David as far as the artificial pool, and as far as the house of the mighty men. After him, the Levites repaired. Rehum, the son of Bani. Next to him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, repaired for his district. After him, their brothers repaired. Bavvai, the son of Henadad, ruler of half the district of Keilah. Next to him, Ezer, the son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. After him, Baruch, the son of Zabbai, repaired another section from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib, the high priest. After him, Meremoth, the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz, repaired another section from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib. After him, the priests, the men of the surrounding area, repaired. After them, Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their house. After them, Azariah, the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, repaired beside his own house. After him, Binnui, the son of Henadad, repaired another section from the house of Azariah to the buttress and to the corner. Palal, the son of Uzai, repaired opposite the buttress and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him, Pedaiah, the son of Parosh and the temple servants living on Ophel repaired to a point opposite the water gate on the east and the projecting tower. After him, the Tekoites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. Above the horse gate,

the priests repaired, each one opposite his own house. After them, Zadok, the son of Immer, repaired opposite his own house. After him, Shemaiah, the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East gate, repaired. After him, Hananiah, the son of Shelemiah and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him, Meshullam, the son of Berechiah, repaired opposite his chamber. After him, Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, opposite the muster gate, and to the upper chamber of the corner. And between the upper chamber of the corner and the sheep gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants repaired.

- Nehemiah, Chapter Three. If you've got your Bibles, find it. How many of you, right now, we just read five minutes of names and you're bored. How many of you actually just took a brief nap? You're like, What in the world? Why are we digging into the Hebrew phone book? Who cares? Here's the big idea. What can we do to make the boring parts of life meaningful? We like to go through books of the Bible. We're in the book of Nehemiah, Chapter Three here. It's just this long list of names. And many of the Bible commentators, they just skip it. Like there's nothing here, just move right along. Here's what we believe. Everything in the Bible is there for a reason. Amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- It says in Second Timothy Three that all scripture is God-breathed and profitable to prepare us for all of our good works. God's got some good, important, significant things for you and I to do. And everything in the Bible is to help equip us and prepare us to walk in our destiny and do the things that God has called us. Well, in this list of names, there's 38 named people, a number of unnamed people and a bunch of teams. And the reason that it doesn't matter so much to us is 'cause we don't know them. But imagine if your name was in the Bible, mine is, the gospel of Mark. So, imagine your name was in the Bible. Imagine if the team that you worked with, or your division at your company, or maybe the volunteers that worked with you in our ministry, you made it in the Bible. It would go from being your least favorite to your most favorite. You would take it out, post it, show everybody, I made the book. And then the big idea is this, that God cares about people. And God knows what you're doing and God knows where you're working and God knows how you're serving and God cares. Even if other people don't care, God cares. If other people don't know, God knows. Wherever you go, there may be a number of people that don't know your name. But wherever you go, there is a God who knows you, loves you, and He calls you by name. And so, what we're gonna talk about is why God would include these names in this great chapter of the Bible. Here's the first point. Any good work done to glorify God is sacred. The list here is a bunch of people who are just regular folks working regular jobs putting in regular days. Now, the story is this, the walls surrounding God's city of Jerusalem had been destroyed. The gates had been burned, the city was uninhabitable. God's people were absolutely scattered and discouraged and the temple was closed. The worship of God couldn't happen. Jesus is supposed to come to Jerusalem, live, die, rise in Jerusalem, send the gospel out from Jerusalem to Judaea, Samaria, ends of the earth. Everything is hinging on God's people rebuilding the walls and the city and the temple of God. And what we see here are the

people who are doing the, quote unquote, good works that God prepared in advance for them to do. The good works include digging holes, building a fence, shoveling dirt and hanging gates. And we may think that's not very spiritual. It's very spiritual. You need to know that your work is sacred. And if you do anything for the glory of God, it's sacred, it's spiritual, it's special. It's ministry, it's magnificent, it is absolutely ordained of God. Here's how I know that. Genesis One says that in the beginning, God created our world. The word in the original language literally means God worked. Our God works, so it must be godly to work. Just tell America that, by the way, it's a message we need to get out. In addition, Genesis, Chapter Two, verse 15, God makes our first father, Adam, says he put him in the garden to what? To work. So, if you're a guy, go to work. If you're a single guy, get two jobs. Work, work, okay, go to work. God made us to work. And then what we see in Colossians Three, I wanna read it to you regarding Christian work, whatever you do, work hardily, do your best. As for the Lord, not for men. For from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. Our God works, he made us to work, and if we are believers in Jesus Christ, we work ultimately not for our boss, but our boss's boss. Over our boss is someone called the Lord, the Lord Jesus. And even if you don't like your boss, serve the Lord over your boss. What he's saying is whatever you do, if you're a Christian, your work is now meaningful, valuable, and purposeful 'cause it's not just connected to the job, it's connected to the kingdom of God. And, ultimately, God is gonna use whatever you do at your day job, wherever you volunteer, God's gonna use all of that to build His kingdom. So, the big idea of what makes life meaningful, valuable, and purposeful is not just what we're doing but who we're doing it for. And we serve the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are following in the example of our Lord. A lot of times people think about Jesus' ministry, He cast out demons, He walked on water. I mean, He did incredible things. He went water skiing without a boat. He fed a stadium with a boy's lunchable. Like, He cast out demons. He did some great things but 90% of his life was swinging a hammer. The first 30 years of his life, Jesus was a carpenter. And then, he did three years of public ministry. So, God comes to the earth, 90% of His life is just going to work just like you and I go to work. And it's Him doing regular menial and sometimes manual labor to serve and to love. And from the example of Jesus and the teaching of the Bible, we get something called the Protestant work ethic. There was a sociologist named Robert Bellah, wrote a great book, and he asked, why is America such a prosperous country? Why is it such a prominent country? And he realized that it was something called the Protestant work ethic. That God's people worked six days a week, they rested for one, they worked wholeheartedly under the Lord, and that's why we even gave our children chores. And, what's interesting, America was built on the Protestant work ethic, and the farther we get away from God, the less likely we are to go to work. These two things go together. Amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- How many of you own a business and you're trying to hire right now? You can't get people to go to work and people aren't working. Well, what we see here in Nehemiah Three, God is saying these are all the wonderful people who volunteered and also gave. So, they're giving and serving to expand and extend the kingdom of God. And the big idea is this. It's not what you do, it's who you're doing it for. And the world needs good preachers, but it also needs good

mechanics. How many of you would love a spirit filled mechanic? Amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Somebody who obeyed the ten commandments and did not lie. Amen? We need good roofers, we need good electricians, we need good plumbers, we need good accountants. Lord knows we need a few politicians. Like, we got some holes to fill. And so, if you love the Lord, whatever you're doing on behalf of the love of God is part of a significant and valuable ministry. That's why these people are getting named in the Bible. Recognized and honored for going to work and doing their job. And so, I can't get into all of it today, but we're gonna do real men's Wednesday night, 6:30 live in the room or online at Real Faith, and I'm gonna talk about why God made men to work and how, for a man, work is part of his worship. But that's just the big idea I wanna start with as we enjoy our time together. And so, they were working on rebuilding a home where God's people had worshipped for generations, then it went into disrepair and they needed to bring it back. So, we've tied this sermon series and the study of Nehemiah to our Rebuilding Home campaign. This old building, we are now a six year old church, the building is over 50 years old and it was beautiful and then it was in disrepair. We've made some progress and our capital campaign is to finish rebuilding home. Phase one, park out front. Phase two, more kids ministry space that's expanded. Phase three, more broadcast as we're reaching over a hundred million people a year from this place online. Phase four, pay off our mortgage and we're gonna collect our commitments on pledge weekend, October 15th and 16th. You can go to trinitychurch.com and make your pledge or bring it on that weekend. But I just wanna encourage you, they're working on this project where God's people were worshiping and then it just sort of was not kept up with and they're trying to bring it back. So, I thought this would be a little fun to give a little example from our own ministry. So, this is our building on the left. Somebody thought that Jesus like the color bandaid. And so, they painted the whole building bandaid. So, we painted it back to the original colors. And then, what we're looking at right now on the capital campaign for Rebuilding Home is a big, huge beautiful park out front where people can mix and mingle and receptions and worship events and student activities and maybe a few wedding receptions. Next slide, please. This was our original auditorium on the left. That's what it looked like. And now you guys could see where we're at today. We brought in this great piece of furniture to hold all of our gear. Thank you for your generosity to get us this far. And then, the last one was our kids' ministry on the left. That was our kids' ministry when we got the keys to the building. We call it the backyard, it started as the prison yard. There was nothing but just cigarettes and dumbbells and, you know, cactus. And the kids' building, it was gross. I'll explain it in a moment. On the right, that's where it is now. We've had as many as 500 kids, 10 and under, back there on a weekend. Can we say amen to that?

- [Congregation] Amen. That's great. And so, on the bottom is our concept to expand it and to use every inch and to turn it into a great sort of theme park for the kids. Let me just explain where the kid's ministry was when we started. The whole kid's building had zero children. The first portion was a kitchen with a pilot light that was very old. And then, next it was lots of pews and lumber stacked. I don't know if they wanted to burn it down. It looked like it probably could

deserve that. And then, the last thing in the kids' building was a wood shop. There were no children, so the older men got band saws and routers and they were in there doing woodworking. It's like, well, okay, so we have power tools next to stacked kindling with an open flame. Hey, kids, have a good time. And so, right? Obviously, dads put this together, not the moms. And so, thank you for your generosity. We've made great progress. And where we find ourselves in Nehemiah Three, they've made some progress and they're finishing rebuilding of home. That being said, what we're seeing here is some very ordinary days in Nehemiah Three. The next point is ordinary days and extraordinary days both matter. In your life, do you have mainly extraordinary or ordinary days? Ordinary, right? What'd you do today? I got up late, I stepped on the scale, I wept bitterly. I got dressed, I fought traffic, I sat in a cubicle and then I came home to do my laundry. Then I wept bitterly and then I went to bed. That's Tuesday. Most days are not extraordinary. Most days are very, very ordinary. Very, very. And see, we lie on social media. Just so you know, social media is where all the liars go. You know, every day they're like, it was amazing. No, it wasn't, you set that whole thing up. We know that you're bloated and your cat threw up. We know that's what really happened today. We know that's what really happened. What we see in Nehemiah, there are some extraordinary days, some supernatural days. There's also some ordinary days, some very natural days. Nehemiah Three, ordinary day, everybody just going to work. You stack the stones, you dig the hole, you shovel the dirt, you hang the gate. And what we're gonna see a little later in the book is some extraordinary days. There's a revival that breaks out. Once they get the city secure, once they get the walls built, once they get the temple open, the Bible is taught, the Holy Spirit falls, it's like Pentecost for the Old Testament. Wonderful things happen. People are saved. Lives and legacies are changed. But here's the big idea. The Bible records the ordinary and the extraordinary days 'cause God's in both. And, oftentimes, we think, I wish God would show up. He did. He was sitting next to you at the cubicle while you returned your email. God's in the ordinary and the extraordinary. And what we see here is most days are just ordinary days. But God's in them and God's accounting for them. And they're significant and they're sacred. And what happens is in the ordinary days we prepare for the extraordinary days. They're preparing the city and the temple for the revival. A lot of the work that we do is ordinary to prepare for the extraordinary. That's even why we're rebuilding our home. A lot of ordinary work is gonna get done and we're trusting God for some extraordinary future. And what can happens is you get discouraged 'cause sometimes what happens is we read the Bible, we just skip all the ordinary days. You're like, oh, there's a list of names in Nehemiah Three, skip, skip, skip, skip, skip. No, just remember, that's like you going to work this week. God knows and God cares. And, oftentimes, what happens when we read the Bible, it's the extraordinary days that really stand out to us. I hear this all the time for people that are like, I was reading the book of Acts, which is the history book of the New Testament church. They're like, gosh, I wish we were in the days of Acts. There were miracles and healings and supernatural. True, true. But let me just summarize this. There are 14 healing miracles in the book of Acts. 12 of the 28 chapters have a healing miracle, but Acts covers 30 years. So, sometimes, when you flip a page, you're flipping a decade. What that means is, even in the book of Acts, for every extraordinary day, there's 700 ordinary days. God's in all of them. So, what I wanna do, I wanna look at lessons for leaders and people serving God together in ministry from Nehemiah, Chapter Three. We're gonna talk

about leadership. And the British Field Marshall, Bernard Montgomery says, quote, "Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose and the character which inspires confidence". Leadership is, here's our goal, you can trust me. And then the people follow. We'll just deal with these in succession. Number one, everything rises and falls with leadership. How many of us right now would acknowledge, politically, economically, culturally we've got a few problems. True or false? We got all kinds of problems. And what we need is leadership. Everything rises or falls with leadership. The walls, the city, the temple have been destroyed for 141 years. Zero leaders got the job done. Nehemiah shows up, spoiler alert, if you read the rest of the book, he gets the job done. Everything rises and falls with leaders. Number two, we see here the principle of singular headship and plural leadership. This is a God-given organizational principle that starts with the Trinitarian God of the Bible. There's the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is the head and then the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, the son of God, they are the plural leaders. And what happens is, if all you have is plural leadership, there's no headship, there's no leader, there's no vision, there's no decision maker. If all you have is singular headship without plural leadership, you get a dictatorship. And so, what God designed was singular headship and plural leadership. It's in the Trinity, it's also in the family. So, in our family, I'm the head of our household and Grace and I are the plural leaders. In addition, this principle carries forth in business. It carries forth in sports. It carries forth in ministry. If you wanna lead, you've gotta figure out your structure. Singular, headship, plural leadership. Here, who is the singular head of all that is happening? Nehemiah. He writes the book, he makes the plan. God speaks to him and he's writing this book of the Bible 'cause he's the singular head. Principle number three, delegate and elevate. Reading a business book right now and here's what it says. If you're a leader, at some point, you need to delegate what you were doing and elevate to do some new things. Pursue new opportunities, overcome new obstacles. If you've been working in a job or a ministry or a leadership capacity, and we all have leadership responsibilities at some level, at some point you need to delegate what you were doing and elevate to do some new things. So, for example, I've been a senior pastor for 26 years and when we first started, our home phone was also the church phone 'cause that's all we had. I was a volunteer, we had no offices, no staff. So, if you called, guess who answered the phone? I did. You could try tomorrow, call the church, I'm not gonna answer the phone. Here's why. Well, I love you, but it's delegate and elevate. And, sometimes, what happens is people are like, well, this is my job. That was your job, now it's someone else's job. God needs you to go up and do a new job. We see that here with Nehemiah. At first, he was alone and now he got a team and now he has delegated a lot of the work and he's elevated himself to a new level of leadership responsibility. Principle number four, look for old stones to repurpose. The wall that was encircling their city had been torn down so the people couldn't be secure. I know this is crazy and sometimes we read the Bible, we're like, it's such old book, it doesn't have any practical value, right? I mean, could you even imagine a country that didn't have a wall to protect its borders and keep the people safe? I mean, crazy. So, anyways, just something to pray about. So, what happened was all the stones were torn down and they were scattered so the wall couldn't be built so the people couldn't be secure. But, what they did, they went back and they took the old stones and then they re-stacked them to rebuild the wall. Sometimes, it's figuring out, well, what were the old principles? What were the old relationships? What were the old

resources? Sometimes, it's good to go back and read old books and biographies and look at history and try and figure out how to bring the best of the past into the present to bless the future. And here at Trinity Church, our building is literally an old stone. And then it's made out of concrete. And, literally, it was a building that was built 50 some years ago. And when we got here, it didn't look like God's house. It looked like a haunted house. But it was an opportunity to say, could we use what God's people had previously, repurpose it, rebuild it, renew it? And so, exactly what they're doing is, to some lesser degree, the very thing that we're doing. In addition, for those of you who are in leadership, maybe in business or in ministry, look outside your team to round out your team. In ministry, in business, wherever there is leadership, there's always this debate in question. Do we raise up our leaders from within or do we recruit from without? The answer is, it's good to do both. So they've raised up a lot of their people, leaders and servants from within. And then they're recruiting in some other people to join their team. We hear of the men of Jericho, the people from Tekoa, Gibeon, Mizpah, Zanoah, and Beth Haccherem. Some of you are new and you're like, Pastor Mark, did you say that right? I don't know, I went to public school. And so, my answer is always read fast and confident. Nobody knows how to say these names. But, nonetheless, if you're in leadership, you do your best to train up people from within but there's always gonna be a few holes. Your business, your ministry, or wherever you're serving and you recruit in in addition to raising up. And that's what we see that they're doing here. In addition, a diverse team is the best team. The New Testament uses the language for the church of a body. And what it says is the body needs a lot of different parts and we don't need all the parts to be the same. How many of you are glad you don't have 17 left legs and no arm, right? And that's a Humpty Dumpty situation you got right there. And so, the way it works is, the diversity of the body works together and the church body is like the physical body. Different people bring different gifts and do things differently. And together, they don't compete, they complete. And so, that's what we see here. You're gonna read in Nehemiah, Chapter Three, there's priests, so religious professionals, craftsman, people who are really good at woodworking or masonry or stonework or gold work. There's officials, so those who are leaders and have degrees in power. There's women and, oftentimes, women weren't involved in projects, but they are here as God honors them. There's bachelors, so even the single guys showed up. You know the Holy Spirit's involved when the single guys show up to work. In addition, there are temple servants, there's security guards, there's business leaders. And so, a diverse team is the best team. And this is one of the most beautiful things about the Church of Jesus Christ. Most diverse movement of any sort of kind in the history of the world, a few billion people on earth today say they love and serve Jesus Christ as their God and Savior. And so, in the church we have people who are young and old and rich and poor, black and white, and those who are healthy and those who are sick and those who have succeeded and those who are struggling and everybody's welcome. And there's a place for everybody to have meaningful, valuable, purposeful contribution to team Jesus. That's what we see here, everybody's involved. Very rarely would you see these people all working together for anything except for the cause of God. In addition, principle seven, a culture of honor is godly. A culture of dishonor is ungodly. Now, true or false, our culture right now is a culture of dishonor?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- If you wanna trend online, attack people, get negative, right, go dark. If you wanna bless and love and encourage and serve, you're probably gonna get hammered by the people who are negative. What Nehemiah is doing here. Can you imagine, right, it's like, hey, we got a new book of the Bible. What is it? It's called Nehemiah. And they're reading it and you're like, that's my name. That's my team, that's my family. I was an usher, I was a greeter, I was a landscaper. I didn't know I was gonna make the Bible, that's amazing. Would you feel honored if your name was in the Bible? Totally. What Nehemiah is doing as a leader, he's setting a culture of honor. And I always say that culture is two things. It's what you teach and what you tolerate. He's teaching and modeling honor. And then, he can't tolerate dishonor. There are two enemies and critics of his that were mentioned in the previous chapter. They're gonna be present through all 13 chapters, Sanballat and Tobiah. They're enemies of God and enemies of God's people. And they keep trying to come against this culture of honor with a culture of dishonor. They're discouraging God's people. They're debating with God's people. They're deriding God's people. It's all negative all the time. It's a culture of dishonor. So, Sanballat and Tobiah really represent the culture of hell, and that's dishonor. And Nehemiah is modeling the culture of heaven, that is honor. Culture comes from one of two places. It either comes down from heaven with the Holy Spirit or it comes up from hell with demons. What Sanballat and Tobiah are doing is demonic. It's evil. Dishonor. What Nehemiah is modeling is honor. And I just wanna say this, for those of you who are joining us online, you're probably not privy to this, but even our worship team tonight, leading is from 11 different churches across the valley of Arizona. And, you know what? There is one capital C Church. We don't speak negative of other churches. We don't speak negative of other pastors and leaders. Satan's already got the job of criticizing and attacking so there's no need for us to nominate ourselves to that role. We can attack ideas, but we need to love people. And what he's doing here, he's establishing a culture of honor. And he's honoring those who are serving in giving. And then, lastly, a unified team without a superstar is better than a superstar without a team. So, let's just field test this. The people that are listed, there isn't a rockstar superstar, it's a bunch of people that are just very normal, but they're all working together in a unified way. One superstar will be defeated by a unified team of regular people, okay? So, let me ask you, who do you think the greatest, we'll field test my idea, who do you think the greatest basketball player in the history of the world is?

- [Congregation] Michael Jordan.

- Michael Jordan comes first, maybe Kobe. Maybe Steph Curry. Who's the worst basketball player in the history of the world? Me, okay, me. I have a two inch vertical and I can't shoot to save my life, okay? Jesus intended for me to stay close to the earth. I'm not supposed to leave it. So, I'll show you my vertical. Okay, there it is, that's my vertical, okay? But imagine five of us on a basketball team that were unified with a plan working together. We might be able to defeat Michael Jordan. At least something to pray about. But the point is this, they are a unified team of hardworking, humble, devoted people. And God does extraordinary work through ordinary people. God does supernatural things through natural people and God does His perfect work through imperfect people. That's the big idea. And this is an encouragement 'cause sometimes

we think, I'm not an all star. Play your role on the team. Be unified with the team and God will bless that team. Those are the lessons for leaders. And then, there's eight principles from Nehemiah Three for people. God works for you, in you, and through you. This is one of the big concepts that we love here at our church and we introduce it at what we call Team Trinity, where we get you plugged in to find your position on team Jesus to serve here. So, God works for you. God comes to the earth as Jesus Christ. He lives without any sin. He dies on the cross in our place to pay our penalty for our sin. He does all the work for salvation and he says this, it is finished, all the work is done. He dies and then He rises. He conquers Satan, sin, death, hell, the wrath of God. He forgives sin, He returns to heaven. And, right now, Jesus will forgive your sin. Jesus will change your life. Jesus will alter your destiny. That's our Lord. And, ultimately, He works for you. And then He works in you. He sends the Holy Spirit to give you a new nature, new desires, new mind, new power. All of a sudden you're like, I wanna learn the Bible, I wanna pray, I wanna sing, I wanna serve Jesus. I wanna leave my old life. I wanna walk into my newness of life. Things change in you. So, God works for you, He works in you, and then He works through you. You're like, okay God, what are you doing in the world? How can I be a part? Who can I serve? Where can I give? What can I do? How can I contribute and make a difference for your kingdom and your cause? And that's what these people are doing. They are believers. God has worked for them and they trust in Him. God has worked in them, now they wanna volunteer and serve. And God is working through them. And what they're doing is serving the cause of their God. In addition, what we see is leaders work on the plan, people work out the plan. What can happen is, if you're in a company and you're working, you can get very jaded and critical of leadership or management. Oh, we're always working, they're never doing anything. Sometimes, the leaders are working on the plan and then the people are working out the plan. So, I'll give you a simple case study. The park we wanna build out front, Lord willing, we'll raise the money and we'll build a park and we'll build it next year after Easter and finish it in time for our seventh birthday next September. And, for four months, you're gonna come in and out of the church and it's gonna be torn up, Lord willing, and you're gonna see guys working. So pray for 'em, bring 'em a cold drink, tell 'em we love 'em 'cause they're gonna be in Arizona outside in the summer. They're gonna be working. But their four months of work is preceded by almost two years of work. We had a concept, okay, let's build a park. Okay, what can we do and not do. Who do we get for a landscape architect? What are the original designs? Okay, now we gotta talk to the city. Took a full year to get a permit. In addition, now we've gotta raise the money, then we've gotta order all the materials and then the last four months will be doing the work. But, before that, it's gonna be a couple years of planning. And this is how life works. That some people need to work on the plan and some people need to work out the plan and they're all working together. Here, Nehemiah isn't the one doing all the work, but he's planning all the work. He's making the plan, he's raising the money, he's getting the building permits, he's dealing with the government, he's meeting with the lawyers, he's fighting the PR battle. He's working on it so that people can work through it. Number three, a serving family is a special family. As you read Nehemiah Three, there's a lot of times it says, and this family served here and that family served there. Let me tell you the key to growing in faith and family. Serving. We're in Scottsdale, Arizona. True or false, serving others is not the greatest value that we give to our children growing up? We tend to think if I can get a good coach, good teacher, good youth

pastor, if I can get the right people to serve my kid, they'll be like Jesus. No, they won't. 'Cause Jesus didn't come to be served but to serve. You can't be like Jesus by being served. You can only be like Jesus by serving. And so, ultimately, if you want your marriage to get stronger, serve Jesus together. You want your family to go deeper, serve Jesus together. The family that serves together, sticks together. That's the way that it works. And here we see families working together. One of my favorite things here is we get to see some families, there's three generations all serving together. Earn kids or worship or whatever the case may be, wherever God calls them to serve. This family started as a work project from our family. My wife and our five kids. It was the kids who wanted to plant the church. So, we prayed and planned and then we showed up to work parties. When we first started, how many of you were here at the very beginning, right? There was no sound system, there was no band, there was no kids' ministry. All we had was a Bible study. And then we put on our boots and our gloves and we did demo and work parties. That's where we started. And we did that as a family. And I'll tell you this, it's one of the greatest gifts that's ever been given to my family. Serving together, figuring out our gifts, pulling together for the cause of the kingdom of Christ. And what we see here is family serving together. One of the best things you can do is just figure out, hey, if we have a family, where do we serve? And God will bless that. In addition, we see that some people refuse to work. It says in Chapter Three, verse five, "Their nobles would not stoop to serve the Lord". The nobles were the religious leaders. These were the political influencers. These were the people with money and power and prestige. And what they said was, we don't get our hands dirty. Those jobs are beneath us. Those are for the slaves and the servants. Those are for our employees, that's not for us. And, ultimately, they missed out on the blessing because the blessing comes in the serving. In addition, they didn't understand the heart of God. Jesus comes to the earth, I told you, first 90% of his life, he's going to work swinging a hammer. If you would've showed up with Jesus on the job site, say, who are you? I'm God. What are you doing today? Sawing and hammering. You don't have anything more important to do today? No, this is what I'm supposed to be doing. He was glorifying the Father in heaven every day, including the days where He just went to work and He got His hands dirty. If you would've met Jesus, He had callouses on His hands. He swung hammer. He was fit 'cause He walked a lot. There were days that He was sweating heavily 'cause He was working manually. And then, there was even an incredible day where Jesus goes to wash His own disciples' feet. He gets down on His hands and knees. He does the lowest job of all. And He cleans not just the feet of His disciples, but one particular guy named Judas Iscariot. Well, if God is willing to wash Judas' feet, who is His betrayer and ultimately was demonically possessed, then we can't say as Jesus' people, I'm above that. I'll tell you this, Jesus still serves me. And if I have a God who's willing to serve me, then I need to be willing to serve like my God. The nobles didn't get that. They thought that certain things were beneath them. In addition, some people do more work than others. I've got it listed in the study guide. You can get it for free on the way out or online at realfaith.com. The study guide has a bit of commentary, memory verses, helps you learn God's word. But there are people who get more done than others. In any team, there are some people who are just more productive. There are some people that have higher capacity. And there are some people who show up early and stay late and they just get more done. And He honors that. And it's not to dishonor the people who just did a good job, it's to also honor the people who did an

exceedingly good job. It's good if you're at work to call out those people who are high achievers. It's good when you're on campus at church to say, hey, thank you. Thank you for doing that. Thank you for being faithful, consistent. We live in a world where there's so much discouragement, a little encouragement goes a long way. We live in a world of so much dishonor, that a little honor goes a long way. And, oftentimes, the people who are serving most faithfully, they're not expecting any acknowledgement. But, if you thank them, it's a big deal to them. And, ultimately, they're doing it for the Lord, but a little gratitude goes a long way. In addition, some people work from home. There are multiple times in Nehemiah Three that as they were assigned sections of the wall to rebuild, it says that certain people repaired opposite or beside their house. So, some people are going into the church to serve, other people are working from home. I don't know if this was BC, Before Covid, but apparently they're remote working. I don't know if they're zooming in to their team meetings or what, but some people go in and some people work remotely. And we see as long as they're serving in their God ordained and assigned area, that's where they work. In addition, some jobs are less desirable. As you're reading the city, it has gates and different people are saying, I'll repair that wood and I will reattach that gate. There's one gate that seems like the least desirable, the dung gate. You're like, who wants the dung gate? I don't know what we're gonna do there, but it doesn't sound good, okay? So, there are certain jobs that are less desirable. I was joking with the team at our staff Bible study, Ha ha ha, a dung gate. And everybody in the nursery is, that's where we're at. There's a ton of diapers back here. I was like, oh yeah. So when we do the Rebuilding Home capital campaign, maybe we actually have a dung gate and that'll be the door into the nursery. Welcome to the dung gate. And here's the good news, number eight, unknown people are known by God. See, we read the list in Nehemiah Three, we're like, I don't know these people. God says, I do. We say, I don't care about these people. God says, I do. We say, I don't know what they did. God says, I do. And it's true for you. God knows you. God loves you. God sees every day of your life. God knows every longing of your heart. God sees every good work that you do that springs forth out of love for and relationship with Him. Your life is not wasted, it's invested. What you're doing may not seem like a big deal but, to God, you're a big deal and you're part of His kingdom and that's a big deal. I want this to encourage you. It encouraged me. And some of you wonder, does anybody know? Does anybody care? Does anybody pay attention? I'm trying my best. Yeah, God does. God does. And John Maxwell, he's a leadership guru, he says there's four kinds of people, cop outs, they're never gonna serve. Hold outs, they always got an excuse. Drop outs, who start and stop. They quit and give up. And then, all outs, who you can depend on. Nehemiah Three are the all outs. Let me say this church is filled with a lot of all outs. Okay? I'm really happy as your pastor to tell you, you're a hardworking, unified, joyful, generous church family. You just are, amen, just are. Grace and I were at a pastor's event this last week in Dallas, Texas and the average church is running 50% free covid, 50% of pastors, statistically, want to quit. So, I'm meeting with a lot of pastors. We even met with a few that are in a very difficult season. And they would ask, so how are you doing? I felt bad telling them. I was like, actually, it's the best season of my whole life. Actually love our people, I love what I'm doing. I love what I'm doing. I love who I'm doing it with. I love how we're doing. Like, I'm happy. Like, I have vision. I'm excited. I see a great future. I'm having a blast. I'm married to my dream girl. I yell for hours every week from the Bible. Like, this is great, I'm having the time

of my life. And it really is the people who make it awesome or awful. It really is. These people in Nehemiah Three, they're awesome. You guys are awesome. And if you're new, you're wondering, is he just flattering? No, I don't have that spiritual gift. I don't have that gift. But these are great people and you're great people. And God had great things for them and God had great things for us. And one of the reasons that I'm so excited about Nehemiah, their government was a disaster and not gonna care for God's people. Sound familiar? Yep. Their economy was in a recession and decline. There's a whole chapter on the economic downturn. Does that sound familiar? Absolutely. Their culture was a total disaster and mess. Very familiar. And many of the churches had gone apostate. They were marrying unbelievers, raising their kids as unbelievers. The whole reason that God allowed the temple to be closed is 'cause people weren't honoring Him. It's just like the day we live in. But there was this remnant. They did love the Lord. They did wanna honor and serve the Lord. And what they needed was they needed a church home for the family of God. They needed a place where they could be built up in a world that beats them down. They needed to be encouraged in a place that was different than the world that discouraged them. They needed a place to fall in love and get married and make babies and have hope. And God blessed their efforts and then there was this tremendous revival. I think we're living in the days of Nehemiah and we want to do the deeds of Nehemiah. And I was thinking about it, too, what we see in Nehemiah Three is all these awesome volunteers. We live in a day you can't even get people to go to work. Have you noticed this? Everywhere you go, Now Hiring, what positions? All positions. Like, CEO to janitor, we'll take you. Whatever you can do, we got a room for you. I keep going to restaurants. We're like, sorry, we're closed early. Why? Nobody will come to work. Showed up to restaurant recently, it was closed. Door said, Sorry, nobody showed up to work today. Meanwhile, the church is open. Our church is growing. And it's 'cause you guys are volunteering. Wouldn't it be crazy if we had to put a sign on the door, sorry, no services this week, nobody showed up? The Church of Jesus Christ is very different. The world tries to motivate people with money. But I'll tell you what, if you love God, that's the greatest motivation of all. And we're seeing the Church of Jesus Christ open when everything else is closed. We're seeing the Church of Jesus Christ filled with volunteers when businesses can't even get people to show up to work. So, I wanna encourage you with this. Jesus has another list and another home. Philippians 4:3 talks about the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life. Whose name makes the book of life? Those who serve the Lord. This is the book of rewards. This is you standing before Jesus and hearing well done good and faithful servant. Jesus has a book and your name is in it along with all of the good works you've done out of love for the Lord. Revelation says in multiple times as well, there is, in eternity, a book of life. And where it is right now, the book of life is in the kingdom of God. Jesus told us this, He said after He died for our sins and rose and He returned to heaven, He said, I'm going to what? Prepare a place for you. Jesus right now is rebuilding our home. He is building our home. Jesus the carpenter has still got a project that he's working on. He's building our home. That's the language that He uses. He says in my father's house. That they're building this home for us. So, one day your life will end and then your life will really begin. Right? That you will be with Jesus. And you're gonna enter into the home that He has built for you. And, in that home, there's gonna be a book just like Nehemiah Three. And it's gonna be a list of names and you're gonna look through and be like, there I am. Maybe with my wife and my kids and our

team and my coworkers. We made the list. And then you're gonna get rewarded eternally for all of your good faithful works to the Lord during this life. 'Cause we're not saved by our works. We're saved by Jesus' works, but we're saved to our works so that our life would be meaningful, valuable, and purposeful. And as we work here, we are building His kingdom. And then, everything that we are doing connects to what He is building there. And, eventually, His kingdom comes and His kingdom servants are rewarded, encouraged, and blessed forever. Well, I love you. Thanks for being a great church family. Thanks for letting me teach. I'm gonna pray. We'll release the online audience and then we're gonna have a great worship party. This is a shorter sermon so we have more time for worship. If you're new, you're like, that was a short sermon. If you've been here a while, answer.

- [Congregation] Yeah.

- Yeah, that's a short sermon. All right, let me pray. Father God, thank you that you work for us. Thank you that you work in us. Thank you that you work through us. Father, thank you that you worked for us through the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus. Thank you that you work in us by the person, the presence, the power of the Holy Spirit. And thank you God that you work through us, that you make our life meaningful and valuable and purposeful. That it is connected to eternal things. And we thank you, Jesus, that when we go to work, you go with us. And one day you're gonna come for us. And so, we look forward to that day. In Jesus' good name, amen.