

Rebuilding from Brokenness

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[0 : 00] miracle Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[3 : 12] I want you to understand how this book works together, that God has put this together to share a redemption story. And so the teacher in me loves week one. The nerds here love week one.

And I'll spend some time tonight working through the history and the overall storyline, and then we'll really dive into the details next week. So let's kind of start this series by just reading the first four verses of the book of Nehemiah.

I have stalled to give you plenty of time to find the book, okay? So if you're now able to stand, please do so as we honor the reading of God's Word.

It says, The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hekaliah. Now it happened in the month of Kislev in the twelfth year that I was in Susa, the capital, and Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah.

And I asked them concerning the Jews who'd 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.

[4 : 24] The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire. And 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. Would you pray with me? Father, thank you for this time to be together to study your Word.

Thank you that every book in your Word is inspired by you. And I pray that as we begin this journey through the book of Nehemiah, Lord, that you would speak to us, that you would encourage us.

Lord, that you would give us a great vision of your great power to bring restoration. And so, Lord, help me tonight as I seek to teach your Word faithfully.

Give me the words to share. I pray in Jesus' name. And God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated. When J.J. Redick walked to the podium, he could hardly hold back the tears.

[5 : 38] The coach of the Los Angeles Lakers wasn't emotional because he had lost another playoff game or basketball game. No, this loss was far more personal than that.

J.J. was trying to hold back the tears as he shared with the media what it was like to have his home and all of his possessions destroyed in the California fires from earlier this year.

His home, along with so many others in that area, were completely devastated, completely destroyed.

Redick told the media, I was not prepared for what I saw. It was complete devastation and destruction. Our home is gone.

The Lakers head coach went on to detail about how he lost everything, but that many of the things that he missed and was so heartbroken over were not things of financial value.

[6 : 44] Many of them were just memories that could never be replaced. He talked about the charcoal pencil painting of a lighthouse that his son had painted for him when they lived back in Brooklyn.

J.J. said everything that we'd owned, 20 years as a couple, 10 years as parents, all those memories were gone, and you can't replace stuff like that.

And it wasn't just the personal loss that he was so upset about. J.J. also expressed how difficult it was for him to lose an entire community.

J.J. said, We move out here, and the Palisades community has really just been so good to us. And I think that's the part for us that we're really struggling with is just the loss of community.

And I recognize that people make up community, and we're going to rebuild, and we want to help lead on that. But all the churches, the schools, the library, like, it's all gone.

[7 : 52] And I think the thing that hit home for us the most was Tuesday night. You know, the rec center caught on fire. And the day we visited the house and decided we wanted to live in the house, we were like, let's go explore the village.

And we stumbled upon the rec center, and there were some summer rec league basketball games going on. One kid, Milo, was playing. I was like, oh, he's pretty good.

He ended up being one of our neighbors. They lost their home. The rec center was like this place we were at every day. I mean, flag football, basketball, the playground, baseball, tennis courts.

It just, and everyone we knew was there every day. And you just, it just hurts to lose that.

And J.J. closed his remarks as he was giving that press conference after describing all the personal loss that he'd faced, all the loss of the community.

[8 : 58] He said these words, quote, I'm not sure I've wept or wailed like this in years.

Faith and I, let me ask you tonight, have you ever had that feeling before? Have you ever gone through a time in life where you experienced a period of great loss?

I know many of you, and I know that you have. Maybe for some of you, it wasn't the loss of a physical home, but it was the destruction of a family or a relationship.

Some of you, it was watching your own or someone else that you love's health completely deteriorate. Many of you have lost someone that's so precious to you and dear to you.

Maybe you went through a season where your reputation was ruined or your career or vocation turned to ashes. But my guess is that most of us at some point in life have felt like J.J.

[10 : 01] where you hadn't wept and wailed like that in years. Your heart was on the ground.

You couldn't eat. You couldn't sleep. You were devastated. And Romans 8.28 seemed like a practical joke.

If you've ever known that kind of loss, if you have ever known that kind of devastation, then you know exactly how Nehemiah feels in the opening pages of this story.

Look at it again in what we read in verse 3. It says, They told me the remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

And the wall of Jerusalem is broken down. And its gates are destroyed by fire. And as soon as I heard these words, I sat down and, say it, wept.

[11 : 12] I wept and mourned, how long? For days. And I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah, in the very opening pages of this story, is heartbroken. He is devastated. He is miserable. His shalom has been shattered.

And he weeps for days. And you might ask, why? Why is Nehemiah weeping? Why is he having such a breakdown? Because if you know anything about Nehemiah's story, and we'll discover this later, he's working for the very king of the Persian Empire.

That's the most powerful nation on earth at the time. His life could not be better circumstantially when all of a sudden he has a total breakdown, a total meltdown.

He weeps for days. Why? Here's why. Notice it on the screen. Nehemiah is broken hearted not because his house has been destroyed, but because God's house has been destroyed.

[12 : 21] Listen, if J.J. Reddick can be that upset, that broken hearted, at the burning down of a rec center, how much more the burning down of the house of God?

Amen? I mean, you talk about a place you come together and play flag football. This is a place where people came to meet with God. It's where God would come down and dwell with Israel.

And when Nehemiah hears of the rubble that remains of the city, that remains of the walls, he can't eat for days.

Total brokenness and devastation. And as we're going to discover more throughout this book, you're going to find that Nehemiah is a man who has a passion for the glory and worship of God.

And so when news gets to him that the city and the walls remain in rubble, it breaks his heart. Now the question is, why had the temple, the city, and the walls been destroyed?

[13:32] Many of you may know that answer, but for me to do my due diligence as a pastor, I want to take you on a journey throughout the Old Testament. So those of you that love history or maybe you just like a story, I'm going to tell you the whole story of the Old Testament.

Yes, the whole story leading up to the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah gives us a few clues as to the historical setting of what's going on. Look, for example, in verses 1 and 2, you see here that he was in Susa, the citadel, that is the capital of the Persian Empire.

We also discover that he's being told about those who had survived the what? The exile. So that helps us put this in historical context concerning Jerusalem.

And then later on in chapter 2, verse 1, we see some more historical clues. It's the 12th year of King Artaxerxes, which is a Persian emperor.

So right away, we begin to understand that Nehemiah is living in the days of what's known as the exiles. More specifically, he's living during the time when the Persian Empire was in control.

[14:45] Now again, let's go back and trace this through world history as well as biblical history. The nation of Israel starts with a man named Abraham.

Right? The nation of Israel. We started with a man named Adam. The nation of Israel started with Abraham. Abraham was to be the father of this great nation. Remember that God promised him a seed, an offspring through Sarah.

And they didn't even have any children and they were too old to have children. And yet God fulfilled his promise in giving them Isaac and then Jacob and then this little family in the Middle East by the time you get to the end of the book of Genesis has grown into an entire nation.

And then you enter into the Exodus, this redemptive period for the nation of Israel. Now I know you know all this because we studied the book of Exodus. You get this one wrong, you will fail the class. Alright? You remember this, right? The nation of Israel will spend 430 years as slaves in Egypt but God is still faithful to them. He is still faithful to his promises and he delivers them through a man named yeah, you got to get that one right, through Moses and he brings them to Sinai and you remember what happens at Sinai?

[16:09] God marries Israel. They enter into this covenant and then the older generation will die in the wilderness but Joshua will lead them into the promised land.

Now once they get into the promised land it's not long until they start asking for something. They want to be just like every other nation and so they ask God to give them a king.

This begins the Davidic kingdom of the Old Testament story. Now even though it starts with Saul, it's really David and his son Solomon where the nation will enter into what Trump calls the golden age.

Alright? I had to work that in. Sorry. And they will increase land. I knew I'd get at least one clap. They would increase land and they would increase people and they would increase in power. In fact, what was just a tent in the wilderness will now become this massive temple known as Solomon's temple.

[17:14] Do you remember that Solomon's the one? David asked the Lord if he could build him a house and God says, no, you're not going to build me a house. It will be your son that will build a house for me and that would be known as Solomon's temple.

This massive, massive place where God would meet with his people. But towards the end of Solomon's life and reign, he's going to lead the nation of Israel to do the very thing they promised they would not do at Sinai.

It was the terms of the covenant. Do you remember Exodus 20, verse 3? You shall have no other gods before me. Solomon, if you know the story, is going to begin to worship foreign gods and he will lead the people of Israel into idol worship.

As a result of this, when Solomon dies, they're going to break out into a massive civil war. In fact, the nation's going to split now into two specific kingdoms.

The northern kingdom called Israel, the southern kingdom called Judah, and it's there in Judah, the capital Jerusalem, where Solomon's temple was built.

[18:29] Now, unfortunately, even after the kingdom splits in two, both, although early on it's far more the northern kingdom than the southern, but unfortunately, both of them continue in this disobedience to God.

They continue in this idol worship. Even though God sent prophet after prophet after prophet to warn them to turn back to God, but they refuse, they even mock the messengers that God sends,

and God does what He promised He was going to do, and He sends judgment. First, 722 B.C., the northern kingdom will be taken captive by the Assyrians. Shortly thereafter, in 586 B.C., the Babylonians will do the same to Judah.

And remember, Judah is where Jerusalem is, and in Jerusalem is the temple. Solomon's temple. So this is the city of God, this is the temple of God, and the walls that surround it.

This now ushers into, now we're almost to Nehemiah, this ushers into the next season of Israel's story, and that is the time of the exiles.

[19 : 45] Now, two very important things happen during this time frame. First, Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed. It will be completely devastated.

And secondly, the people, both in the north and in the south, will be taken captives into foreign lands. Let me read the historical account of this from 2 Chronicles, chapter 36, beginning at verse 15.

verse 16. The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by His messengers because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place.

Do you see that, faith family? God was pleading with His people, come back to Me. Turn from your idols and return to right worship of God.

Verse 16. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words and scoffing at His prophets until the wrath of the Lord rose against His people until there was no remedy.

[20 : 52] His patience had worn out. Therefore, He brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, that is the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword and the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on the young man or young woman, old man, or aged.

He gave them all into His hand and all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the Lord, the treasures of the kings and His princes, all these He brought to Babylon.

And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all of its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels.

He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword and they became servants to Him and to His sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia.

You still with me? How many of you love the history? How many of you are falling asleep? Wake up, alright? We're almost to Nehemiah. Listen, the golden age of David is over.

[22 : 05] It is a distant memory. The people of God will now be exiles for 70 years. In fact, God will promise through one of His prophets, a prophet by the name of Jeremiah, that this exile will last exactly 70 years.

and at the end of 70 years they will be allowed to return home. Now the question is why would they be allowed to return home? I mean, did the Babylonians just change their mind?

Did kings like King Nebuchadnezzar just decide that they no longer wanted to have captives? No. What comes on the scene is another nation, the Persian Empire, who defeats the Babylonians.

And the Persians actually have a very different policy in how to handle captives than the Babylonians did. You see, the Persians believed that the best way to maintain peace was to not take people from their homeland and force them to worship foreign gods, but to let them go home to their homeland and practice their own religion.

They figured that such freedom would then encourage loyalty to the Persian government. So, the first king of Persia, Cyrus, not only sends Israel home, he gives them the credit card.

[23 : 36] Go back, rebuild, worship your God in your homeland. Now question, who do you think is orchestrating all of this? Do you actually think the Persian emperor, Cyrus, is reading the book of Jeremiah and wonders, hey, how might I be used to fulfill God's word?

Not quite. Cyrus is just acting out on the policy that the Persians had, but God is working behind the scenes.

Amen? He always is fulfilling his promises. In fact, notice what 2 Chronicles says in verse 21. This was to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah.

Ezra, who we'll learn more about in just a moment, the book starts with this. In the first year of Cyrus, the king of Persia, the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled.

The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. In other words, God is the one working behind all of this.

[24 : 49] It was a good place for an amen. I paused for it. You missed it. All right? Listen, the question is, faith family, does God use unbelievers to accomplish his purposes for the good of his

people?

And all the Minnesotans said, you betcha. You betcha he does. Absolutely, God uses unbelieving kings and unbelieving people to accomplish his purposes for his people.

The proverb says, the king's heart is like channels of water. God turns them wherever he wishes. Make no mistake, Cyrus is not sovereign.

Yahweh is. And he is orchestrating all of this to bring his people back to their homeland in Jerusalem just as he promised in what is known by biblical historians as the second exodus. This happens in three ways. Group A is going to happen under a man by the name of Zerubbabel. Name your first child Zerubbabel. Right?

[26 : 01] Zerubbabel is going to return and he's going to lead a group and their primary focus is going to be rebuilding the temple. And then you're going to have another man who's going to lead group B. His name is Ezra.

In fact, you really need to take Ezra and Nehemiah and that's why they will focus on Nehemiah. We'll talk a lot about Ezra because really this is one book divided in two sections.

But Ezra leads group B and they primarily focus on the restoration of the law. Ezra is a Bible teacher. And then finally, the third wave is Nehemiah.

And he's going to return and he's going to primarily focus on the rebuilding of the city and the walls surrounding the city. Now, this news now gets us to Nehemiah.

Does everybody get the history? I mean, we just went from Abraham to Nehemiah in what? Two minutes. It was a little longer than that, but it felt like two minutes, right? So that's the story that provides the whole context.

[27 : 02] Now listen, Nehemiah now hearing the news that, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. It's been over a hundred years. Seventy exile, about twenty years of Zerubbabel, over a decade of Ezra, and then the news gets to Nehemiah that it's still not finished.

It breaks his heart. Why is it taking so long? Why are the people of God not focused on restoring the worship of God?

And so when he hears that the city still lays in rubble, he can't eat. And he weeps for days.

That's Nehemiah and its place in Israel's history. But let me say a few words about Nehemiah and his own story. What will unfold over these next few weeks.

Look again at chapter two in verse one. In the month of Nisan, the twelfth year of king Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king.

[28 : 17] You probably know this if you know anything about Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king. Now to most of you, that sounds kind of like a run-of-a-mill butler, but this was way more than that.

Nehemiah is a highly trusted and intimate counselor to King Artaxerxes. In fact, we're going to discover three things about this man Nehemiah that I hope is going to encourage you and teach you in your own walk with God.

The first is this, is that Nehemiah, we'll discover, is a man consumed by the glory of God. He loves God. And he loves the worship of God.

And so when Nehemiah hears this, you begin to understand why it breaks his heart. Look again at chapter 1 and verse 4. 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 with those who love him and keep his commandment.

[29 : 26] 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.

Does that give you a little bit of a flavor of Nehemiah? Like he loves God. He loves the glory of God. Listen, listen, Nehemiah is broken hearted not because he loves the temple, not because he loves his homeland.

He's broken hearted because he loves the glory of God. And he knows that what people need is to worship God.

And keep in mind that Nehemiah has never lived in Jerusalem. He's only heard stories of all this. He has a burden to rebuild the walls because he wants the presence of God to once again be among the people of God.

[30 : 37] Nehemiah, you will discover, is a man who is zealous and passionate for the glory of God. Secondly, we will discover in Nehemiah's story that he is a man committed to the ministry of God.

Committed to the ministry of God. Nehemiah is going to travel a thousand miles to Jerusalem. He's going to listen. If you've zoned out, what do you do? Zone back in.

He's going to spend three days, three days surveying the damage and then he's going to pull together some prominent leaders and convince them that God is with us.

Let's do this. In fact, notice their response in chapter 2 verse 18. It says, And I told them the hand of my God that had been upon me for good and also of the words that the king had spoken to me.

And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they what? They strengthened their hands for the good work.

[31 : 41] The Hebrew there is literally a picture of commitment. That is, it takes Nehemiah three days. People have been wasting 20 years. And in three days, he rallies the people, convinces them that God is with them, and they commit their hands to the work.

This guy gets it done. Listen to me, faith family. I have learned in ministry there are talkers and there are doers. Amen? You ever learned that in life?

There are people who like to talk about doing something, and there are people who just get down to doing something. Nehemiah is a man that gets it done. He is a man whose heart is so preoccupied with the glory of God that he will accomplish in 52 days what the nation had been unable to do in 90 years.

God uses this man because he is committed to the ministry that God had called him to do. And the wall goes up without any difficulty at all.

Right? You clearly haven't read the story. I mean, after all, ministry is easy. I mean, when God calls you to do something, it happens without any opposition at all.

[33 : 05] Are you sensing the sarcasm? Because I'm laying it on pretty thick. the story of Nehemiah is not a fairy tale because life, even the Christian life, is not a fairy tale.

Amen? Listen, how many of you have ever wondered, how many of you have ever asked a question like this? Why is my life characterized by so many trials and struggles at work and difficulties with children when all I want to do is be faithful to God?

Anybody ever wondered that? Why am I having to deal with so much conflict and so much trial and so many struggles? Why is life so full of hostility and opposition?

Oh, we're going to learn through Nehemiah that anybody who attempts to do anything for the glory of God can always anticipate opposition. Almost like it might be spiritual warfare.

Where did I hear a series on that recently? Well, I've already forgotten it. But anyways, in fact, in chapter 6 there will even be an attempt on Nehemiah's own life.

[34 : 17] An attempt to destroy his reputation and through it all, do you know what Nehemiah stays committed to? The calling God placed on his life.

He is a man that is not only consumed with the glory of God, he is committed to the ministry of God even in the face of challenge after challenge after challenge.

You think you're going to be encouraged by this series? You will. Thirdly, Nehemiah cared about the people of God. He cared about the people of God. Listen, the wall is going to be rebuilt by the end of chapter 7.

The problem is the story doesn't end in chapter 7. Nehemiah doesn't take off his overalls and get caught up on his Netflix reruns. Instead, what he does is the hard work.

Notice here. Notice this on the screen. Because Jerusalem was not destroyed. Oh man, this will preach. Are you with me? Jerusalem was not destroyed because of idle hands.

[35 : 21] It was destroyed because of idle hearts. So what does Nehemiah do after the rebuilding of the wall?

Listen, he begins to rebuild the people. And in Nehemiah 8 through 10, we see one of the greatest revivals in the Word of God.

The people blow off the dust of their Torah and they start reading it again. And they recommit themselves to God.

They dedicate the wall. They bring in singers and choirs and instruments and it is joyful and it is loud. The text says that you could hear it from far away and no one was complaining on how loud the music was.

that's Nehemiah as it fits in the Old Testament or Israel story. That's Nehemiah and a little bit about his story.

[36 : 35] Now let me take just a moment and talk about Nehemiah and our story. That is why, what does Nehemiah have to do with us? Because again, let's be honest, there's a lot of the Old Testament that we don't know how to relate to.

Amen? That's probably why I spend so much time in the Old Testament. Because I want you to love all the Bible. I don't want you just to be a Gospel of John Christian.

Praise God for the Gospel of John. It's fantastic. But I want you to love all of the Bible. I want you to see that Nehemiah is written for you. And that his story has so much to say about your story.

In thinking about the idea how the Old Testament we tend to think it doesn't have a lot of relevance. I was reminded of the preacher who made the mistake of showing two young boys the sermon that he was going to preach on Sunday.

And being the practical jokers that those boys were, when the preacher was away, they glued the pages of his Bible together. So when Sunday came for him to preach the sermon, the preacher stood up and read his text for the day, which went like this.

[37 : 47] And Noah, when he was 120 years old, took unto himself a wife who was, turn the page, 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high, built with gopher wood.

The pastor puzzled, paused, and read it again. And then he read it a third time. Finally, he looked up at his congregation and said, beloved, I've read the Bible many times. This is the first time I've ever read this.

Yet I believe the Bible to be true from cover to cover. It is the inerrant word of God, so I accept this truth. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. That's kind of how we relate to the Old Testament, right?

I don't know what to do with this. And this is kind of how we feel about Nehemiah. Again, we usually only drag it out if we're having a building campaign. But I think this story has a lot to say to us.

And there are at least, from a pastoral perspective, two primary objectives I have for preaching through this book. There will be more, I assure you, but these are the two primary ones.

[38 : 58] Here's the first, and it's a personal application, and that is that God brings restoration out of ruin. Amen? Do you believe that?

That God brings restoration out of ruin. Listen, we have all faced seasons of destruction and devastation. Relationships, finances, vocations turn to rubble.

And often in those moments we ask, can it ever be rebuilt? Will God ever restore? And if that's you, the book of Nehemiah is going to serve a great encouragement to you because this whole book is about rebuilding.

and seeing God do His gracious work of bringing restoration in your life. Listen, if God can restore the temple and the city and the walls, He can restore your heart.

He can restore your life. So I want you to come and be a part of this series purely because to be edified and encouraged that no matter if all you see is rubble, God can do the mighty work of restoring you.

[40 : 19] Here's the second objective I have. So that's kind of more personally, like at your heart, and then this is more at all of us as a church. Oh my, we'll see if I get any amens on this one.

Ministry is not the pastor's job, it's the people's job. Thank you for saying amen. Okay, I'm done. No, I have a job to do, but so do you, amen?

I think why I landed on this series pastorally, because people often ask, like, why do you pick the series that you do? I just put every book of the Bible in a hat, and I just draw, no, that is not how I do it, okay?

I'm usually, one of the questions I'll ask is what do we need to hear? Where are we at as a church? And where we're at as a church is that Faith Family, by God's grace, has endured the early years of church planting.

Many of you have been on this journey with us. We have been in multiple locations, multiple services, we've had staff in and out, we've had people that have come and gone, but praise God, as of literally about a year ago right now, we moved into our very own facility, and it has been such a

wonderful year of doing ministry here together, amen?

[41 : 36] But as I say, and you've probably heard this before because I didn't invent it, but as I say a lot in leadership training, what got you here won't get you there.

What got you here won't get you there. Listen, Nehemiah is about God's people coming together to do the work together.

together. So this will be really uncomfortable for some of you because I'm going to be asking, again, some of you are brand new and we want you to rest, we want you to just be here and be fed, but there's going to come a point that if you're going to be a part of family, you're going to have to be a part of the family.

And that is being willing to share the work, being willing to step up and say, I'm in, let's do this together, let's put our hands to the work that God has called us to do.

Amen? And not for the sake of work, for the sake of worship. Again, Nehemiah is not like, I just really need to keep people busy.

[42 : 51] No, he's like, the temple needs to be restored, the city, the walls, for the worship of God. Oh, it's a far bigger vision than just keeping people busy.

And what I love about Nehemiah is that he's not a Bible teacher, he's an administrator. Nehemiah doesn't have a PhD in anything. He's a layman who loves God, wants to do the ministry of God, and wants to edify the people of God.

And God uses this man to do great things. So that's why I want to encourage you to be a part of this. Personally, that no matter what rubble you're going through, it can be restored, and congregationally, that it is time for us here at Faith Family, for us all to do the work of the ministry.

Well, one final point, one final point, that's this. Nehemiah and Israel's story, Nehemiah and his story, Nehemiah and our story, and then finally, Nehemiah and the gospel story.

I close with this. I love leadership. I have a PhD in leadership. I do leadership training. I love leaders. I love teaching leadership.

[44 : 10] But listen, listen, listen, listen. The book of Nehemiah is not about Nehemiah's leadership. That's about all I hear. It's either a building campaign or here's practical tips from Nehemiah on how to be a leader.

And they miss the whole point of the book. Oh, that's not to say that there aren't leadership lessons that we can learn from this, of course. But that is in no way the primary purpose of this book.

As I have shown you now, every time we have been in the Old Testament, the Old Testament story, every book, every story points us to the ultimate story which is about Jesus Christ and Nehemiah is no different.

I'll give you just a taste and we're done. What is the overall story of Nehemiah? It's this. Listen and lean in. Nehemiah serves at the right hand of the king and because of brokenness and the sinfulness of his people, he is sent by the king from the royal palace of the Persian Empire to a people living in devastation and hopelessness.

And Nehemiah willingly, not begrudgingly, not because he has to, he willingly gives up all that status at the risk of death threats to his own life, all for one purpose, the restoration of God and his people.

[45 : 44] Does that sound familiar to you? Yes, my dear friend. You see, Jesus is the ultimate Nehemiah. He left the glories of heaven, not the Persian Empire.

He was sent by the father, not a Persian king. He entered into our brokenness and hopelessness. But unlike Nehemiah, it actually did cost Jesus his life as he would be crucified and killed for our sin. And why did Jesus do this willingly? Not because he had to, not because he was forced to, but he willingly laid down his life. Why?

In order to bring restoration and reconciliation between God and his people. Listen, faith family, notice it on the screen.

This story is not about Nehemiah the great leader. It is about Jesus the great Savior. And Nehemiah will point us over and over again to Christ and him crucified.

[46 : 53] So faith family, I ask you, have you, like JJ, known loss? Have you known that feeling of destruction and devastation?

Nehemiah did. In the opening pages, when he hears the news that the temple walls remain in ruin, he wept and he wailed for days.

But Nehemiah will learn what all of us need to learn, and that is that our God is the one who takes our rubble and brings restoration.

Listen, he is the one who can take what has been broken and make it new. And all God's people said, Amen.

Let's pray. Let's pray. So Father, here we go on another journey through another book that you have given us inspired of your spirit. And I pray that even this evening we will already begin to see things that we need to hear, that we need to learn, that we need to be encouraged by.

[48 : 08] And so Lord, we just lay this before you in your sovereign hand, asking you to take this series and to take this journey over these next few weeks and just talk to us.

Speak into us personally the message of hope and restoration and speak to us congregationally that we would commit our hands to this work.

All because we love you and your glory. And I pray this in Jesus' name and God's people said, Amen.

Amen. Thank you.