

[4 : 39] In whose name I pray. And God's people said, amen. Amen. You can be seated. It's an actor's worst nightmare. To walk out on the stage, staring at a sold out audience, and you can't remember any of your lines.

That's exactly what happened to Liev Schreiber, the 56-year-old actor who's been in several hit movies and a popular Showtime series called Ray Donovan.

He was starring in a Broadway show. Now, he had been dealing with a headache for most of the day, but by evening it had gotten worse. And so he thought, I'll just be able to push through. I'll be able to get through this. But when he left his dressing room to start the show, he ran into his co-star, Amy Ryan, backstage, and he couldn't remember her name.

That's when he knew something was wrong. In an interview, Liev said, I go on and I do about the first six or seven lines of the play, and I realize I'm not connecting.

[5 : 56] So I try to connect again, and the minute I do, it vanishes. The play is gone from my head.

I'm looking out into a dark audience, and I know I'm in a play, but I don't know what play I'm in.

His understudy had to finish for him. He was rushed backstage to his dressing room where a friend who happened to be a doctor examined him.

Everybody assumed he'd had a stroke, but the MRI results showed negative. Come to find out, he had had an episode of what's known as transient global amnesia.

Essentially, it's temporary amnesia that can be brought on by migraine headaches. In 24 hours, he was normal, and he returned to his Broadway show the very next night.

[7 : 04] Faith family, has that happened to anybody here this evening? Not that you've experienced transient global amnesia. What I mean is, you ever had one of those moments where you seem to forget everything you knew?

And listen, let me be very clear. I'm not talking about sensitive or serious issues like Alzheimer's or dementia. I'm talking about those ordinary moments in life.

Have you ever walked out of the mall and completely forgot where you parked your car? Sinner, right? Have you ever had a conversation with your spouse where they ask you a question they had just asked you an hour ago?

How many of you have that kid that you told multiple times to clean their room, and it's almost like they don't understand English? How many of you, be honest, how many of you, be honest, how many of you have ever gone to the grocery store and forgot what you went there to get?

See, listen, here's what I know about you. Every one of us, regardless of our age, have had a senior moment. Those moments when we forget everything we know to be true.

[8 : 19] But here's what's unfortunate. It happens far too often for most of us spiritually.

You've had this experience, right? You go to church. You hear a great sermon. Just play along, right? You have an amazing experience.

You learn things. You're encouraged in your faith. And here's what you do. You resolve in your mind that you're going to put everything you just learned into practice, right?

You ever had that moment? And then you walk out onto the world stage and forget your spiritual lines. It's almost like you weren't even at church.

And that is exactly what happens here in the nation of Israel in Nehemiah chapter 13. You remember how chapter 7 ends, right?

[9 : 16] The wall has been rebuilt. The wall is complete. But then Nehemiah does the hard work of restoration. Do you remember the big idea we learned a few weeks ago?

That true restoration is not about rebuilding a wall. True restoration is reviving the heart. Amen? What good does it do to have a wall if you don't have God?

And so even though they've rebuilt the wall, the most important thing is that the people of God be restored to God. And that's what happens.

There's a spiritual revival that takes place. It's in Nehemiah chapter 8, 9, and 10. You remember in chapter 8, they have a renewed passion for the Word of God.

Ezra, every preacher's dream, reads the Word for six hours. And the people stood, and they listened, and they were affected by it. And they said amen, and they were grieved.

[10 : 17] And then in chapter 9, they have a fresh encounter with the grace of God. Do you remember? They recount all the history of their failures. God, we turned our back on your law in the Exodus.

We turned our back during the prophets. We turned our back on you even when we were in the land of Canaan that brought about the exile. But do you know what was above all of that?

Above all the history of our failures was the history of your forgiveness. How time and time again you were faithful to your people.

And then in chapter 10, this was last week, they reprioritized their obedience to God. You remember? They said, Lord, we're going to keep all of the law. And we're going to take our witness seriously.

We will no longer give our sons to the daughters of other nations. We will not take the daughters of other nations to our sons. We will be the people you have called us to be, a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

[11:20] And not only that, Lord, we're going to worship you with all that we are. We're going to keep the Sabbath. And not only that, Lord, you have all of our wallets. We're going to tithe to the Levites.

We're going to give all the things that you've called us to give to support the house of God. You still with me? Say yes. So this is the revival they've been experiencing.

Well, now notice what happens in chapter 12. They participate in the worship of God. Look at verse 27. It says, At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sought the Levites and all their places to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings, with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres.

It goes on in chapter 12 to say, I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. And then also in verse 43.

They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced. For God had made them rejoice with a great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. You know everybody's happy when the women are, never mind, right?

[12:27] That's a bad joke, right? And the joy of Jerusalem was heard from far away. In other words, Faith Family, they party like it's 1999. Because if we know anything from the Old Testament, there ain't no party like a Jewish party because the Jewish party don't stop.

Amen? Now for those of you keeping track, that's Fiddler, Prince, and Snoop in a matter of seconds. I am gifted. All right, anyways, all right. But what's happening here in Nehemiah 12 is they're dedicating this wall and the entire city breaks out in worship.

Faith Family, it's revival. God has restored His people. Don't you see? This is what revival is.

If you wonder what revival is, look to the Word of God, not necessarily movements that happen in the world. This is not running around hysteria.

Revival is this. When the people of God renew their passion for the Word of God, have a fresh encounter with the grace of God, reprioritize their obedience to God, and then lose themselves in the worship of God.

[13:56] That's revival. And that's what's happening here. In fact, let's take just a few brief moments because I want to look for our sake as a Faith Family at their worship here in Nehemiah 12.

I'm going to give you, as quick as I can, five characteristics of their worship that I hope will encourage our own. Look at what happens in verse 45. Now, they perform the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, notice this, according to the command of, say it, David and his son Solomon.

Here's the first thing, is that their worship was biblical. Their worship was biblical. This reference here to David is when David arranged the worship for Israel prior to the temple being built.

David knew that Solomon would be the one that would build the temple, not him. And so he organized, according to the law of Moses, the way the people of God were to worship.

So here's the point. Listen right here. In Nehemiah 12, Nehemiah is simply going back to the pattern that David used for the dedication of the temple, and he uses that for the dedication of the wall.

[15:16] Everybody make sense? In other words, what he's doing is he wants to make sure their worship is in line with what God commanded. Listen very closely, faith family.

The most important characteristic of our worship is that it be biblical. What I mean is that it be based on biblical revelation, and here's why.

Notice it on the screen. If you don't worship according to revelation, you're going to worship according to imagination. And that's idolatry, right? We're to worship according to how God has

revealed.

You say, but I don't really want to worship God based on the Bible. I want to worship God based on how I feel. Well, I don't care, right? They say it as sensitively as I can because listen, listen. Worship is not about how you feel. Amen? It's about what God has revealed. So the most important thing of our worship is that it be biblical worship.

[16:17] Paul says this in Romans 10 verse 1. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to what?

Say it. Knowledge. In other words, it doesn't do any good to passionately worship the wrong God. Just because your worship is passionate doesn't mean it's true worship.

Worship must be biblical. That's why we want our songs to be biblically and theologically sound. That's the first characteristic. Here's the next. Look at verse 27. And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sought the Levites in all their places to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings, and I need everybody to say this, and with. And with. One more time. And with. In other words, not only was it biblical, it was vocal. Nehemiah gathers singers from all around the countryside.

He even organizes here what's known as thanksgiving choirs. And the people are singing songs of praise. Faith family, singing is one of the primary ways worship is expressed in the Bible.

[17:41] In fact, the word sing or singing or song appears in Scripture over 200 times. There's singing at creation, singing at the Exodus, singing throughout the Psalms.

That's what the Psalms are. There was singing at the temple, singing at the dedication of the wall. The book of Ephesians tells us this. You know that. Addressing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Say it. Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. In the book of Revelation, Revelation 5, and they sang a new song.

Worthy is the Lamb. No one has more of a reason to sing than a Christian. We are a redeemed people, chosen, adopted, loved by God.

Notice it on the screen, Faith family, the only people who don't sing are those who don't have a song. And we have a song. A song of redemption. And listen to me.

[18:46] Listen. I mean this sincerely. God has given you an instrument in His thanksgiving choir. It's called your voice.

So sing. Their worship was biblical. Their worship was vocal. Notice thirdly, their worship was musical. We won't go back and read the verse again, but in verse 27, it lists all the different musical instruments.

Meaning, this was not just their voices that was raised, but they were playing music. There was instruments that were used. Martin Luther said this, quote, Next to theology, I give to music the highest place and honor.

Music is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us. And if any man despises music, for him I have no liking.

Luther said it in a way that only Luther can, right? Music is a gift from God. Now I'm going to take a moment and I'm going to address us here as a faith family. This may not be comfortable for you, but what do I usually say?

[19:56] I don't care. You need to hear this. This is biblical. Are you listening? Everybody say yes. Music is not filler. Music is not filler.

Let me say it this way. Music is not preparation for the sermon. Music is a sermon. Music is a sermon.

Music is a sermon. It is interesting to me how there are people that would never want to talk during a sermon unless you're saying amen, and yet you'll talk during the music.

People that would never want to walk in late for a sermon, and you'll skip the music and only come in for the sermon. And if that convicts you, so be it.

Beloved, the people of God gathered for worship, and music was a major part of that. Treat it as such.

[20:58] It is a central and important part of our worship to God. It was biblical, vocal, musical, and then fourthly, it was communal.

Now, if you read through this chapter, and I would encourage you to do so, you're going to find one of the things we've seen throughout Nehemiah, which is a long list of names. And it's going to include groups like the priest, the leaders, singers, heads of households, all the women and children.

And the point of the text is that this was the entire community gathered for worship, and they were all participating. Now, I'm not going to say much on this because I've addressed this many times before, that congregational worship is both commanded and practiced, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

So here's the point I want you to get, and it's this. Private worship, which I encourage you to do, amen? You should have times of private worship, but that is never a substitute for public worship. The people of God are still to gather together for the worship of God. Now, let me show you one more characteristic in verse 27. In fact, it's really all throughout chapter 12.

[22 : 12] At the dedication of the wall, they sought the Levites in all their places to bring them to Jerusalem to what? Say it. Celebrate the dedication with what? Gladness.

And with what? Thanksgivings, with singing, with cymbals, harps, and liars. Notice this verse as well. I mean, it's everywhere. You don't need a PhD at seminary to figure out what this verse is about, right?

They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. I love that.

They rejoiced with great joy. And the women and children also rejoiced, and the joy of Jerusalem, get this, was heard far away.

Lastly here, their worship was joyful. When they came together, it was a place full of joy and thanksgiving. So much so, it could be heard for miles.

[23 : 16] I wonder what it would be like if neighbors down the street would be like, yeah, okay, clearly, faith families gathered again because I can hear them from far away. I mean, these people just sing and they just rejoice.

It's like a party goes on every Saturday night. That's what's happening here. Nothing is more discouraging than coming together for worship and feeling like no one wants to be there.

Amen? When you look out and you're just like, where are these people? I mean, they're here physically, but where are they at in their minds? There's a disconnect here.

Listen, when we come together, this place should be full of joy and thanksgiving because we are the people of God gathered for the worship of God. Amen? Amen?

Now, some of you will say, yeah, pastor, but my life is not always joyful. In fact, if I were to be honest with you, right now, I'm going through a season in my life where it's not joyful.

[24 : 18] I'm glad you said that because, listen, you're not here to worship your life. You're here to worship God in whom there are pleasures forevermore. And so, thankfully, our worship is not about the circumstances of our life.

It's about the faithfulness of God in our life, which means I always have a song no matter how hard my day is, no matter how difficult my life is.

Do you remember the apostle Paul when he was stuck in prison? I love this in Acts chapter 16, verse 24. Having received this order, he put them in the inner prison and fashioned their feet in stocks.

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and what? Singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them. Everybody look right here.

Everybody listen. Worship is not what you avoid in sorrow. Worship is what you need in sorrow. Here's why.

[25 : 21] Because prison doesn't have to chain your song. Prison doesn't have to chain your song.

They rejoiced with great joy. Why? Because they were a redeemed people. And worship, notice this, worship is the natural expression of the joy of our salvation.

Listen, listen, listen. I'm going to move on. Are you with me? If you've zoned out, what do you do? If they can come together and rejoice because of a wall, how much more should we come together and rejoice because of the cross?

So that's Nehemiah 12. That's Nehemiah 12. It's all about the people of God participating in the worship of God and it was biblical according to David.

It was vocal. It was loud. It was musical. Everybody's participating and it was full of joy. This is what revival looks like.

[26 : 32] This is what spiritual restoration looks like. It is a renewed passion for the word of God, a fresh encounter with the grace of God, a reprioritizing my obedience to God and getting consumed in the worship of God.

That's revival. And they lived happily ever after. Let's pray. I'm just kidding. That's not how it ends. Oh, how I wish this is how the book of Nehemiah ended. It'd be the perfect ending. It really would. I mean, just think about it. You've got the walls that are now restored and the law that's now being obeyed and the people of God caught up in worship.

It's the perfect ending to the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah. And then there's chapter 13. And the reason why the book doesn't end in chapter 12, listen, faith family, is because if it ended in chapter 12, the reader might be left to think, wow, that Nehemiah is a really great leader.

Boy, that Ezra, whoo, he's a really great teacher. Those people are really hard workers. I mean, in the face of all this opposition with Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem, they just kept working and they did it.

[27 : 59] They accomplished the work for God. Instead, the book of Nehemiah ends with maybe the worst case of spiritual amnesia recorded anywhere in Scripture.

I want you, as I'll do a little more reading of the text, hang with me, hang with me. I'm going to read through some verses in chapter 13 and I want to just show you where in literally seconds, days, the people are.

Look at how chapter 13 begins, verse 1. You still with me? On that day they read from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people and it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God.

There's a whole history behind that I don't have time to do concerning their relationship with the people of Israel and why God asked that they not be allowed. It gives a little bit of that context in verse 2 because they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water but hired Balaam against them to curse them yet our God turned the curse into a blessing and as soon as the people heard the law they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

Wait a minute, wait a minute, whatever. So he told you to exclude two groups and you excluded all groups. Okay.

[29 : 38] Keep reading. Verse 4. Now before this Elisha the priest who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God who was related to who?

Tobiah. He prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering. Do you remember Tobiah? He was one of the sharks.

Do you remember from weeks ago? He was one of the main enemies of the people of God throughout this story and what happens is one of the priests Elisha makes him an Airbnb in the temple.

He clears out some of the chambers that were meant to store the resources for the priest and he makes him a little Airbnb and does anybody remember what nationality Tobiah was? Chapter 2 verse 10 And when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the What?

Wait a minute wait a minute wait a minute wait a minute you were told to exclude two groups you excluded all groups and then you made an exception for a guy who was in one of the two groups and then Nehemiah wants to make sure that you know something very clear look at verse 6 listen listen while this was taking place I was not in Jerusalem right Nehemiah is like that kid that wants his parents to know listen I didn't do it right I didn't do it it was the dog it was the dog I had no part of it and so Nehemiah separates himself for this keep reading verse 10 Then I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them so that the Levites and the singers who did not work had to flee each to his field so I confronted the officials and said why is the house of God forsaken right is everybody still with me you gotta hang with me Nehemiah is saying wait a minute you're not tithing to the Levites so much so they're having to go get other jobs and you say why is that a big deal it's a big deal because in chapter 10 the most repeated promise

[31 : 47] Israel made was we we will support the house of God with our tithes verse 15 in those days I saw in Judah people treading the wine presses on the and bringing in heaps of grain loading them on donkeys also wine grapes figs and all the kinds of loads which they brought into Jerusalem on the what's going on here now they're working on the Sabbath the very thing they promised they wouldn't do in chapter 10 oh no no we're gonna tie to the Levites we're gonna make sure we take

care of the ministry in the house of God until they don't oh and we make sure we will promise to obey the Sabbath until they don't now verse 23 verse 23 and in those days I also saw the

Jews who had married women from Ashdod Ammon and Moab were you here last week if you weren't shame on you right but if you were here you remember come on come on the very thing they promised to do I mentioned it earlier is we won't give our sons to the daughters of other nations and we won't take daughters of other nations for our sons until they don't listen every promise they made yesterday they're breaking today they have this amazing moment they went to church they heard Ezra read the word they were convicted they fell on their face they acknowledged their sin they rested in his faithfulness they worshipped him throughout the city and walked right back into the world and forgot their lines and Nehemiah loses it look at verse 25

Nehemiah says I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair he goes crazy here's a little news flash it's not funny in fact it's pretty freaking unfunny that's Nehemiah he totally loses it on these people I thought what wait everything thing like I go away for a moment and I come back and every promise you've made you have forgotten and the book ends and there are times as a student of God's word I sometimes want to look to God and say you really need an editor because there's some books in here that could really end a better way I don't know like stop at chapter 12 like have you ever wondered why does the

Bible just not end on the good part end it with the people of God in worship why do you have to end with every single thing being unraveled I mean the book starts with reverence for the temple the glory of God they work hard to restore the wall they're experiencing an amazing spiritual high only for everything to systematically unravel in the end are you with me why why does the book end this way somebody say preach preacher given all the time we've spent in the Old Testament you should by now be picking up one very important theme and if you've zoned out you had better zone back in and that repeated theme is this the failure of any human being to usher in the kingdom of God maybe Moses will do it and he dies in the wilderness maybe David will do it the greatest king we've ever known he dies and the nation divides maybe one of the Davidic kings that comes from his line what do they do they lead Israel repeatedly into idolatry and ultimately into exile and leading up to the book of Nehemiah there is this longing and anticipation for the restoration of God's kingdom Daniel anticipates this do you remember in Daniel chapter 9 beginning at verse 1 it says in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus who was made king over the realm of Chaldeans that's the Babylonians the people that took the Nehemiah people in exile in the first place in the first year of his reign

[37 : 14] I Daniel perceived in the books the number of years that according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem namely 70 years everybody right here Daniel reads that checks his calendar and says it's been 70 years the time of restoration has come so he hits his knees he prays!

what begins to happen God starts bringing his people back this is it the final restoration has come the prophetic hope that we've been longing for is now here and then there's three ways we've talked about it the first wave with Zerubbabel I know you love his name and we'll name your first male child Zerubbabel right first wave is Zerubbabel that doesn't accomplish the task second wave is Ezra that doesn't accomplish the task third wave is you better get this one right Nehemiah and it appears as though the task is finished the temple is built the wall is restored the walls are finished the people are worshiping and then spiritual amnesia sets in and they're right back doing the very thing I hope you're listening they're doing the very thing that sent them into exile in the first place and so what is the reader left to conclude but that

Nehemiah could not usher in God's kingdom can't imagine anybody that tried harder can't imagine anybody that worked more diligently to make this happen and it didn't the people are still falling back into their old ways and listen if you were paying attention while you were reading Daniel you already knew this would be the outcome look at Daniel 9 24 I'm almost done but this is the good part 70 weeks that is 490 are decreed about your people in your holy city to finish the transgression to put an end to sin to atone for iniquity to bring in everlasting righteousness to seal both vision and prophet and to anoint a most holy place know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build

Jerusalem to the coming of an an an an an one Daniel restoration isn't coming in 70 years it's coming in 77 490 years and when was the decree given to rebuild!

to rebuild 457 BC go 490 years after and you'll land on 33 AD when ultimate restoration comes in an anointed one who will atone for our iniquity and usher in everlasting righteousness Daniel 9 is not talking about the antichrist it is talking about Jesus Christ the greater Nehemiah in whom true and ultimate restoration is found which means faith family yes which means come on right here the book of Nehemiah ends with this extremely important point you can't restore your life only Jesus can not Nehemiah couldn't do it Ezra couldn't do it you can't do it but there is one who can an anointed one who will come and he will bring in everlasting righteousness don't you see beloved listen to me you may be able to rebuild a wall but you cannot revive your heart only
[41 : 59] God can do that through his son and so I plead with you one last time from the book of Nehemiah if you need restoration and I know many of you do look to Jesus not your hard work not a great counselor those are important things but your life will never be restored apart from the grace of Jesus Christ I close with this no one knew this point to be true more than Peter you remember the night in the courtyard!

don't you? Peter was asked a very clear question do you know him?
are you with him? then a servant girl seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him said this man also was with him but Peter denied it and said woman I do not know Peter forgot his lines forgot his lines he had his moment on the world stage forgot his lines and the rooster crowed and he went out and wept bitterly his life fell apart his life fell everything he'd spent three years doing turned to rubble in three seconds but what did

Peter learn through this oh my nobody can restore your life like Jesus and he said to him the third time Simon son of John do you love me and Peter was grieved!

because he said to him a third time do you love me and he said to him Lord you know everything you know that I love you and Jesus said to him feed my sheep there is someone greater than Nehemiah and his name is Jesus and no matter what you've done no matter how many times you have forgotten your lines no matter how bad your life is in ruins because of what Jesus did on the cross your life can be restored and all God's people said amen let's pray let's pray father thank you so much for your word to us tonight how many times we have forgotten our lines we made a whole lot of promises!

[45 : 47] time and time again have acted like we weren't even there what we see tonight from your word is that there is a redeemer there is one who can restore and it is not in the strength of man but in the savior of God and I pray that in these next few moments as we set our minds on the cross that in communion we reflect on the ultimate work of restoration that you would heal us that you would pick up our rubble and put our hearts back together in you for over our history of failure stands your history of forgiveness and it was paid once and for all it is finished in

Jesus name I pray amen