making room

SO MORE WOULD KNOW

Devotional Series

Week 5 - A God Worth Obeying

Defining Question: *"What is God asking me to surrender - and will I obey?"*

Prayer Challenge: *Surrender your heart to God. Ask Him: 'Lord, show me where I need to obey You more fully. Let Your Word transform the way I live, and help me give You all of me so that others may encounter You through my life.'"*

Day 29 - The Wall Was Never the Point

Nehemiah 8:1–3, 8–10

"So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly... And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law... They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read... Nehemiah said, 'Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'"

We've spent weeks on the wall. Stone by stone, gate by gate. And if you've been walking with us through "Making Room," you know the wall isn't the climax of Nehemiah's story. It never was.

The wall made way for the Word. Once the gates hung and the city was secure, the people gathered, and Ezra opened the Scriptures. He read. He explained. And something happened that no construction project could ever produce on its own - the truth of God melted them. They wept. They worshiped. They repented. Then they recommitted themselves to God in chapter 10.

That's the progression: revelation, then repentance, then rededication. The physical rebuilding exposed a deeper need - a rebuilding of hearts.

Here's what I keep coming back to this week. In two years, we'll walk into a new, expanded space, and it's going to be extraordinary. But the building was never the goal. More room for more people isn't the goal either. The goal is that everyone who walks through those doors encounters the Holy Spirit - the One who convicts and comforts, who corrects and directs, who changes how we think, how we live, how we relate, how we spend our time and money and energy.

That's life to the full. The goal is not a bigger room, but changed hearts within it.

What needs to change in me? Maybe I've been treating this campaign like a construction budget instead of a work of God in my own heart.

Pray: Lord, I fully surrender my life to You. I give You my sin. I give You my strengths. Help me obey You faithfully. Use my life to build something that outlives me. What would You have me give today so someone else can meet Jesus here tomorrow?

Tomorrow: what happens when the Word stops being something we hear and starts being something we do.

Day 30 - Hearing Isn't the Same as Building

Nehemiah 8:5–6, 9–12

"Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, 'Amen! Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground… Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them."

Look at what the people did when Ezra opened the book. They stood. They lifted their hands. They said "Amen." They bowed with their faces to the ground. That's our kind of worship right there - hands up, hearts open, voices together.

But notice what happens next. They didn't stay in that moment. They went home, they ate, they shared food with people who had none, and they celebrated. Their worship moved. It left the square and walked into their houses and their streets.

James puts it bluntly: don't just hear the word, do it. Otherwise you're the person who looks in a mirror, walks away, and forgets what they look like. The people in Nehemiah 8 didn't forget. They understood, and understanding turned into action the same day.

I wonder how many Sundays I've stood with my hands raised and walked out unchanged an hour later. Not because God didn't speak - because I never let it reach my hands and my feet and my wallet. Worship becomes real when what we sing on Sunday shapes what we do on Monday.

This campaign is a chance to let what we sing on Sunday become what we do on Monday.

What needs to change in me? Where has my worship been loud but my obedience quiet?

Pray: Lord, I fully surrender my life to You. I give You my sin. I give You my strengths. Help me obey You faithfully. Let what I sing on Sunday shape what I do all week. Use my life to build something that outlives me. What would You have me give today so someone else can meet Jesus here tomorrow?

Tomorrow: a prayer that changed a nation, and what it says about the room we're making.

Day 31 - When God's People Get Honest

Nehemiah 9:1–3, 5–6

"On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads… They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors… And the Levites said: 'Stand up and praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the Lord.'"

Two days after the biggest celebration they'd had in years, the people came back - fasting, in sackcloth, with dust on their heads. And they confessed. Not just their own sin, but the sin of their fathers before them.

That's uncomfortable to read, isn't it? We like the celebration part. We're less sure what to do with a people who get on their faces and name what's wrong.

But here's what strikes me. Their confession wasn't despair. It was the doorway to praise. The very next thing out of their mouths is "Stand up and praise the Lord your God." They go from dust to doxology in a handful of verses, because honest confession and real worship live in the same room.

Second Chronicles 7:14 says it plainly - if my people humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I'll hear, forgive, and heal. That promise wasn't given to a building. It was given to a people.

If we want God to do something in that new sanctuary, He's asking to do something in us first. And it starts with honesty. Confession is not the end of worship; it is the doorway into it.

What needs to change in me? Is there anything I've been keeping off the table with God?

Pray: Lord, I fully surrender my life to You. I give You my sin. I give You my strengths. Help me obey You faithfully. Search me and show me what I've been hiding. Use my life to build something that outlives me. What would You have me give today so someone else can meet Jesus here tomorrow?

Tomorrow: the promise they signed their names to - and the one we're being invited into.

Day 32 - Signing Your Name to It

Nehemiah 9:38; 10:28–29

"In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it... The rest of the people - priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand - all these now join their fellow Israelites and nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God."

Chapter 10 is where it gets real. They didn't just feel something. They wrote it down, sealed it, and signed it. Leaders first. Then priests, gatekeepers, musicians, servants - and then wives and sons and daughters, everyone old enough to understand.

Notice who's on that list. Not just the wealthy. Not just the ones with something to spare. Everybody. The whole congregation, every age, every station, putting their name on the same commitment.

And look at the posture behind it. Joshua stood in front of Israel generations earlier and said, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." That's the same spirit. A decision, made out loud, in front of people, with your name attached.

We're heading toward a commitment Sunday in this campaign. It won't be about a number. It'll be about a congregation saying together, with our names on it, that we're all in. Faithfulness begins when we stop waiting for a feeling and make a faithful decision.

What needs to change in me? Have I been waiting to feel ready instead of deciding to be faithful?

Pray: Lord, I fully surrender my life to You. I give You my sin. I give You my strengths. Help me obey You faithfully. I'm not waiting for a feeling - I'm choosing You today. Use my life to build something that outlives me. What would You have me give today so someone else can meet Jesus here tomorrow?

Tomorrow: what a surrendered life actually looks like on paper.

Day 33 - First They Gave Themselves

2 Corinthians 8:5

"And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us."

That one verse has been sitting with me all week. Paul is talking about the Macedonian churches - churches that were poor. Not comfortable. Not flush. And he says they gave beyond what anyone expected. But before he mentions a single gift, he tells us why: they gave themselves first to the Lord.

That's the order. Not the amount. The order.

Romans 12 says the same thing in different words - present your bodies as a living sacrifice, and don't let the world squeeze you into its mold. Be transformed by a renewed mind. The giving follows the surrender. It always does.

I know a lot of us in this church are watching our budgets. I get it. I've been there. And I want to be honest with you - this campaign isn't asking everyone for the same number. It's asking everyone for the same surrender. Some of us will give out of abundance. Some will give out of sacrifice, like that widow with two coins. Both are holy when the heart goes first.

If we give ourselves to God, the gift takes care of itself. And that's the version of "all in" that actually changes us. God is not asking everyone for the same gift, but He is asking everyone for the same surrender.

What needs to change in me? Have I been deciding what to give before deciding who I belong to?

Pray: Lord, I fully surrender my life to You. I give You my sin. I give You my strengths. Help me obey You faithfully. I'm giving You me first - everything else follows. Use my life to build something that outlives me. What would You have me give today so someone else can meet Jesus here tomorrow?

Tomorrow: why what you do with God's Word in private shapes what you build in public.

Day 34 - The Word in Your House

Psalm 119:9–11; Deuteronomy 6:6–9

"How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 6 paints a picture of a home where God's Word is just… everywhere. On the doorframes. In the conversation at dinner. On the walk to school. At bedtime. Not a Sunday thing - a daily, ordinary, woven-into-life thing.

That's the legacy worth leaving. Not a building with our name on it. A faith that our kids and grandkids catch by watching us live it - not by hearing us talk about it once a week.

And here's the thing about a new sanctuary. It's not just for us. It's for the family that walks in five years from now who's never heard the name of Jesus. It's for the teenager who shows up with questions nobody at home can answer. It's for the grandkid who needs to see that faith isn't a phase their grandparents went through - it's the ground they stand on.

The Word we hide in our hearts today becomes the foundation somebody else builds on tomorrow. That's how a legacy gets passed down. The Word we plant in our hearts today becomes the foundation others build on tomorrow.

What needs to change in me? Is my faith something my family sees lived, or just something they hear mentioned?

Pray: Lord, I fully surrender my life to You. I give You my sin. I give You my strengths. Help me obey You faithfully. Make Your Word at home in me - and let the people watching me catch it. Use my life to build something that outlives me. What would You have me give today so someone else can meet Jesus here tomorrow?

Tomorrow: the last day of this week - and the question that's been waiting for all of us.

Day 35 - Life to the Full, All In

James 1:22–25; John 14:15

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it - not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it - they will be blessed in what they do."

"If you love me, keep my commands."

Six weeks ago we started making room. And here at the end of this week, the question lands right where it should: what will we leave for those who come after us?

Nehemiah's answer wasn't a wall. It was a people who heard the Word, got honest about their sin, and signed their names to a covenant. The wall was just the room where it happened.

In two years, we'll walk into a space that cost us something. And the only thing that will make it holy isn't the square footage - it's whether the people walking in have been changed. Convicted and comforted. Corrected and directed. Different in how we think, how we live, how we relate, how we spend.

That's life to the full. And it's only available to people who are all in.

James says the person who hears and doesn't do is like somebody who checks the mirror and forgets their own face. Let's not be that church. Let's be the ones who look intently, keep looking, and then go do it. A holy space is not made by square footage, but by surrendered people who hear God's Word and do it.

What needs to change in me? What's the one thing God's been asking me to do that I've been putting off?

Pray: Lord, I fully surrender my life to You. I give You my sin. I give You my strengths. Help me obey You faithfully. I'm all in - not just in what I say, but in what I do. Use my life to build something that outlives me. What would You have me give today so someone else can meet Jesus here tomorrow?

Next week we begin a new week of "Making Room" - and we'll look at what happens when a whole church moves together.

This devotional series is part of the "Making Room" Capital Campaign at Grace Covenant Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia. For more information or to participate, visit gcch.org/mr or contact the Church Office via email: questions@gcch.org or by phone: (540) 433-9244.

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