

The Start to Something Great

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NEXT: From Northwest Houston to the World | February 8, 2026 | Nehemiah 1:1-11

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

All right, I want to invite you to take God's Word and turn to Nehemiah chapter 1.

I was asked this week by someone what my favorite book of the Bible was to study and preach from, and I replied that typically it's the one I'm currently preaching and studying. I have found that to be the case as I've been looking at Nehemiah in my own time alone with the Lord. It's so rich. It's been incredibly rewarding to just read and study it in depth.

I've never preached this book before, and it has just been a treasure chest of insight. I've absolutely loved reading about this man Nehemiah and the mission that God calls him to accomplish.

One of the reasons I wanted to preach the book of Nehemiah during this season of our church is because it dovetails perfectly with our NEXT initiative. For example, Nehemiah senses a calling to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. They had been broken down and needed restoration. We are sensing a calling to build some walls at our North Klein campus for additional life group space and to restore our worship center here at Champions.

Certainly, in a spiritual sense, as believers in Christ, we're all called to rebuild and restore lives that have been broken by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and serving people tangibly, showing them the love of Jesus.

Nehemiah had to pull people together. He had to inspire and challenge them to do their part, and if they did, God could accomplish this great task through them. This is where we're at. In order to accomplish what God is calling us to, we've got to come together, we've got to play our part, and we've got to ask God to do what only He can do.

We'll see throughout our study that Nehemiah faced a lot of obstacles along the way, and I assure you, as we move forward in this three-year journey of generosity, we will overcome some of the same obstacles that Nehemiah faced as well.

This is a really exciting book, and I'm telling you, it is an exciting time to be a part of what God is doing at Champion Forest.

With that being said, I want us to look at Nehemiah chapter 1. The title of the message today, if you're taking notes, as I always encourage you to, is "The Start to Something Great."

I'm going to read all 11 verses in Nehemiah chapter 1. The Bible says this:

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem.

And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you.

"Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

"Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'

"They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.

"O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

— Nehemiah 1:1-11

God's Providence

As we outline this passage of Scripture, we're going to break it up into two major sections. The first section I want us to take note of is what I'm calling God's providence.

We're going to see, as we make our way through the book of Nehemiah, and certainly here in chapter 1, that everything revolves around this man Nehemiah. But the main character, the One who is behind it all, is One named Providence.

If you've been around Champion Forest for any length of time, you've heard us teach theologically on the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God is the belief that God is supreme authority, that He operates absolute control over the affairs and events of this world.

You might have heard me say it like this before: man plays chess, but God plays checkers. That's His sovereignty. Or maybe you've heard me say, "Nothing touches the child of God without first filtering through His holy hands."

This is the providence of God.

Jonathan Edwards, the great theologian and pastor from the First Great Awakening, was known in his writings to capitalize the word Providence, using it as a name for God. Many of the Puritans did this as well.

This year is our 250th celebration of the founding of our country. You read the Declaration of Independence, and you'll see in there that our country was founded by divine Providence, and the word Providence is capitalized. The words God and Providence were used synonymously. Founding fathers like George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson all used this term, Providence.

This is who God is. He's sovereign over all the affairs of the world and governs all the events taking place. The sovereignty and providence of God mean that He can intervene at any moment He pleases, do what He pleases, when He pleases, how He pleases, and nothing and no one can thwart the purposes and plans of God.

That is providence. It's the sovereignty of God.

Personally, this affects us as well. I love walking through here and just meeting people. I'm going to be in the lobby after the service today, and if you're a guest or a new member, I would love to meet you and shake your hand.

I love hearing stories of how people were brought to Champion Forest. I was visiting with a few this morning. All of us, regardless of how we came to Champion Forest, might say, "I was new to the area, and somebody invited me," or, "I checked it out on the website," or, "My company moved me this way, and a friend or neighbor said, 'You ought to be at this church.'" Maybe your story is, "I was just driving down the road, saw this big old church, and thought, 'I'm going to come in.'"

Whatever your story is, you have people, situations, and circumstances going on, but behind it all you have this sovereign, unseen hand moving in your life. It's no accident that you're here. It's the divine providence of God.

In the context of Nehemiah chapter 1, I want us to take some time, just very briefly, to catch up with what's taking place at this point in history. As I do this, I want you to trace the unseen hand of God.

I'm going to put a graph up on the screen for you. Take your phone and take a picture of it. I want you to recall it in your own study if you take this deeper. I'm going to give you a big-picture view to catch us up to what's taking place in Nehemiah chapter 1. It's very important, and again, this traces the sovereignty of God.

In 931 BC, after the death of King Solomon, David's son, if you know your Bible history, the kingdom splits. You have Israel to the north and Judah to the south.

Israel had 19 kings during this time. They were all evil, not a one of them good. Judah to the south had eight good kings and 12 evil kings. It was a time of about 200 years of rebellion against God in general.

During this time, God raises up prophets. He's speaking to these prophets, and He tells them, "Listen, you're going to be judged, and you're going to go into captivity."

That's exactly what happens. In 722 BC, the Assyrian Empire comes in and captures the northern kingdom of Israel. The southern kingdom thinks they're all good because they're not really impacted by this. But if you read the prophets, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, they're saying, "Southern kingdom, you are so off. You're going to be judged too. It's just a matter of time."

In 605 BC, that's exactly what happens. Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar come on the scene. They overtake the Assyrian Empire, and they are after world dominance. They set their eyes on Judah, specifically the city of Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar wants to conquer the city of Jerusalem, and it doesn't take long to get it. Nebuchadnezzar goes in with his army, and they ransack the city. What you have is the first deportation taking place there around 605 BC. This is when Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego get carted off to Babylon.

You continue about 11 years later, and there's a second deportation that takes place. This is when the prophet Ezekiel is deported back to Babylon. He's exiled.

Then you continue 11 years later. This is a big date: 586 BC. This is when Nebuchadnezzar comes into the city of Jerusalem and essentially puts the nail in the coffin, so to speak. He captures Jerusalem and totally destroys the temple.

It's a sad time in the nation of Israel's history. Jeremiah the prophet lives to see it all. You can read in his writings, in Jeremiah chapters 39 and 52, that he's an eyewitness to seeing Jerusalem destroyed. In fact, his book of Lamentations is his journal lamenting what he has seen.

Jerusalem has been ransacked. It's been destroyed. The temple of God, where the people of God had made sacrifices and worshiped for years and years and years, was totally destroyed and burned to the ground.

Jeremiah even writes, in chapter 25, verses 8 through 12:

Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations.

I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.

Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp.

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

— Jeremiah 25:8-12

He's telling them exactly what He's going to do. Again, God's behind it all. He's essentially saying, "Judah, Jerusalem, because of your rebellion and sin against Me, I'm taking joy out of the land. You're not going to

sing songs. You're not going to work. It's going to be a desolate time."

He even puts dates on it. For 70 years, this is going to take place. Then you read Bible history, and 70 years is exactly what happens.

You can trace it one of two ways. The Babylonian Empire captured Judah in 605 BC, and when Persia captured the Babylonian Empire, it was 539 BC. That's 66 years, rounded to 70.

Or, if you want to be more specific, a lot of Bible scholars say the 70 years had to do with the destruction of the temple. It was destroyed in 586 BC, and then it was rebuilt, never to the glory of what it was, in 516 BC - exactly 70 years.

What's the point I'm making? God is weaving this story together. He's working behind the scenes, and He's getting everything ready.

When we get to Nehemiah chapter 1, the Persian Empire is in control. It's been going for about 100 years at this point. When the Persian Empire takes over, there's a king by the name of Cyrus. By the sovereign hand of God, he says, "All of you Jews who were deported and are living here in the Persian Empire, you can go back to Jerusalem now."

There was this first wave back to Jerusalem. It was led by a man by the name of Zerubbabel. You can read about it in Ezra. He goes, and about 80 years later Ezra goes. Ezra was a scribe, and he's there for about a decade.

Then word gets back to Nehemiah, and this is where we find ourselves in Nehemiah chapter 1.

Nehemiah is serving in a very prominent position. As a matter of fact, look at verse 11, the second part. He tells us:

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

— Nehemiah 1:11

Now, cupbearer - that's a big deal. He was a trusted adviser to the king. He was responsible for picking out the wine being served at certain events. He would actually taste the wine for the king to make sure it wasn't poisoned.

You can think of a cupbearer as kind of like a personal valet to the king. No one was closer to the king. He overheard important conversations. The king would ask him things off the cuff and seek his counsel. The cupbearer was responsible for guarding the sleeping quarters of the king. He was the most trusted individual in the king's court. This was a very prominent position.

Here's the question I want to pose: How do you think the man who is second most powerful in the kingdom, who has the king's ear every single day, happens to be a Jew? How did that happen?

It's not his brilliance. It's not his expertise. It's the sovereign, divine hand of God. It's Providence working His will all the way through this story.

In fact, Nehemiah is serving King Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes' father was the one who was in control when Esther saved the entire Jewish nation from genocide. God saved that entire Jewish nation for this point in history, when Nehemiah is going to step up to the plate.

All the way through, God has been moving in the background, preparing, getting people ready, and ensuring that what He desires, what He longs for, and what He wants gets carried out. It is the providence of God.

Listen, all of us in here have free will. We make choices and decisions, some of them positive and some of them negative. Some of the decisions we make, we have to live with the consequences of those decisions for the rest of our lives. We have a free will.

But hear this: God's sovereignty and His providence aren't, for a moment, threatened by man's free will.

This should give us great confidence. It should encourage us that God's purposes will stand and that what God ultimately wants, He will get done.

The great C. H. Spurgeon said it like this: "The sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which the Christian rests his head."

Believer, listen to me today. God is large and in charge. He is sovereign, and He is in control. Providence is at play in your life. Can I get a witness? That's good news today, all right?

Nehemiah's Posture

First, I want us to note God's providence. Second, though, I want us to note and highlight Nehemiah's posture.

Nehemiah is in a position of influence, but from all we can gather, he's a humble man. He loves the Lord. Evidently, he's very committed to God, and he loves the holy city of Jerusalem.

You've got to remember, even though the people were in exile for years and years and years, they longed to go back to the city of Jerusalem. Do you remember when Daniel was told not to pray? He went up to his house, and what did he do? He faced Jerusalem, and he prayed.

Jerusalem is the city of God, where the glory of God dwelled. They loved this city.

In Psalm 137, verses 1 through 6, this would have been the cry of the Israelites while they were in Babylon. Nehemiah would have known these words:

*By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.*

*On the willows there
we hung up our lyres.*

*For there our captors
required of us songs,*

*and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"*

*How shall we sing the LORD's song
in a foreign land?*

*If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand forget its skill!*

*Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy!*

— Psalm 137:1-6

They were being mocked and ridiculed.

Nehemiah is this Jewish man in this prominent, God-sovereignly-ordained position. He loves the Lord, he loves God's people, and he loves Jerusalem. We know this because of the first question he asks.

His brother comes back from Jerusalem after being there, serving by Ezra's side. Look at the second part of verse 1:

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel.

— Nehemiah 1:1

That's the November-December time frame, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign. Here is Nehemiah in the capital city, in a fortified palace, Susa the citadel, in the comforts of Persia, and yet his heart is somewhere else. It's in Jerusalem.

Hanani, one of his brothers, comes, and Nehemiah asks him what's first in his heart:

And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem.

— Nehemiah 1:2

"What's going on in the city? How are the people?"

Listen to their response, and then, even more, look at Nehemiah's response, because we're studying the posture of Nehemiah in this moment:

And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

— Nehemiah 1:3

That word trouble denotes danger and misery. It's the strongest word we have in the Hebrew language for calamity and disaster.

These Jewish exiles have returned home. They met up with those who were left behind during the original

deportations, who were just the poorest of the poor. All they face is trouble, misery, shame, embarrassment, and reproach.

Why? Because the walls of Jerusalem are broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire.

A city without walls in this time and age - are you kidding me? It's unimaginable. They could be ransacked once again, invaded once again. There was no safety. There was no security.

When word gets back to Nehemiah, again, look at his response. It tells us a lot about this man:

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.

— Nehemiah 1:4

The news that the people of Jerusalem were in trouble and experiencing shame, embarrassment, and reproach broke Nehemiah. It was such news that he had to sit down.

Have you ever been there? You get such bad news that you say, "I've got to sit down." Or somebody's telling you bad news and says, "We need you to sit down."

It takes his breath away. It shocks him. He's flabbergasted. He can't believe it.

I want to highlight and make sure we get what was really shocking to him. It wasn't that the physical walls were destroyed and the gates burned that got Nehemiah's attention. What made him sit and mourn and pray and fast were the people behind the walls. It's what the walls represented.

Again, with broken walls and burned gates, these people had no safety. They had no security. He was brokenhearted that when others looked at the once-magnificent city of God, they saw a shell of its former glory.

Just think: when people would travel to Jerusalem, you had the glorious temple built. You could see smoke rising from the sacrifices. They would sing these Psalms of Ascent as they marched up to Jerusalem, because it sits on a hill, and they would see the walls. It was this grand city.

But now it was a shell of its former glory. It didn't represent God. It didn't represent His holiness. It was an embarrassment. It so burdened Nehemiah that he sat down, wept, prayed, and fasted.

Just a couple of questions for you to consider this morning, questions of application.

Are you broken for people whose lives are in ruin? That's something to consider. They're all around us.

Does it move you when you hear about someone whose marriage is disintegrating, being destroyed by the enemy? Is there a burden in your heart when a friend is caught in sin of some kind, just in this cycle of shame and disobedience before the Lord?

Does it break your heart to see the need that is all around us - children being aborted, abused, and neglected?

Does it burden your heart to see the lawlessness in our country and to see that people are having a hard time putting food on the table for their families?

Does it burden you when people who are created in the image of God are made to feel less than? Does that burden your heart?

It should.

The second question I'd ask with this is: Does it burden you enough that it leads to action?

In Nehemiah's case, by action, what I mean first and foremost is that he prays. This was his first action. Before he did anything about what he heard, he prayed.

In fact, look at Nehemiah chapter 2, just the first three verses:

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king.

Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart."

Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

— Nehemiah 2:1-3

That's the March-April time frame in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes. The king says, "What's going on, Nehemiah? Why are you sad? You're not sick. This is nothing but sadness of the heart. Tell me what's going on."

They knew each other. There was an affinity here. There was a friendship there.

We'll look at this exchange more next week, but here's what I want you to notice: This exchange happens four months after he receives the word in Nehemiah chapter 1, verses 1 through 4.

Before he ever brings it up to the king, there are four months, 120 days, of prayer.

That's a burden.

He was seeking God. He was letting God, in prayer, shape his heart and clarify the vision for what he needed to do. His prayer is preparation, and he is covering this entire situation and taking it to the Lord in prayer. It's his first action.

When something burdens your heart, believer, what's your first action? Is it to jump in and do something about it, or is it to saturate it in prayer? That's what Nehemiah did.

Verses 4 through 11 are the first of nine prayers in the book of Nehemiah. This is the longest one. I can't go into it in detail just for the sake of time.

We talked about it at our First Saturday prayer time yesterday, and I want to encourage you: the first Saturday of the month, from 8:00 to 9:00, we're in our chapel. It's a beautiful prayer time, one hour. We get after the heart of God.

I'm praying for the day that we have to move it into this worship center because there are so many here praying and getting after the heart of God. It's an hour of power. It gets our month going. You're always invited, 8:00 to 9:00 here at Champions, the first Saturday of the month.

I walked through this prayer. This is a map of prayer. I'll do it quickly. We don't have time, but notice that Nehemiah's prayer is an example. If you're wondering how to pray, just follow Nehemiah's example.

Number one, he acknowledges the greatness of God. You read his prayer in verses 5 and 6:

O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments.

— Nehemiah 1:5

He just goes off: "God, You are great. You are awesome." He begins in praise. He acknowledges the greatness of God.

Secondly, he acknowledges the sin of the people, including himself. This is a prayer of confession. Look at verses 6 and 7:

Confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.

We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

— Nehemiah 1:6-7

When we see how good and great God is and we worship Him, as I said in that Isaiah 6 passage that we preached on the ice Sunday that wasn't ice, we'll see how awesome God is, and when we see how awesome God is, we'll see how awful we are.

Nehemiah confesses his sin.

Third, pray Scripture. I won't look at this, but again, just mark verses 8 through 10. All it is is direct quotes of Scripture. Nehemiah is saying, "God, You said this. God, do You remember when You said this?"

If you want the will of God for your life, we've got to learn to pray the Word of God, because the Word of God is the will of God. We want to remind God of the promises He's made, and this is exactly what Nehemiah does.

Fourth, he makes an ask. Look at verse 11:

O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name.

— Nehemiah 1:11

God has commanded us to ask. Listen, He's a good God, and He said, "Bring your requests to Me." Time after time, Jesus said, "Ask. Ask Me. Ask. I'll pour out. Ask."

You do not have, because you do not ask.

— James 4:2

God encourages us to ask. Nehemiah says:

And give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

— Nehemiah 1:11

I love that. He calls Artaxerxes a man. He's the king, but Nehemiah knows he's before the King of kings. When you're before the King of kings, the most powerful man in the world is just a man.

Nehemiah prays. We'll see how the earthly king responds next week, but I just want you to note the posture of Nehemiah. He's a humble man. Is he in a place of position and prominence? Absolutely. But he's a humble man, broken over what's taken place in the city he loves with the people he loves. God's going to use him in a great way.

Next Steps

In every message I preach over this series, God willing, at the end I'm going to have what I'm calling next steps. They're just going to be points of application. I'm going to center them, because of this season of our church, on our NEXT initiative, but they're certainly not limited to this NEXT initiative.

As we think about God's providence and Nehemiah's posture, what is God teaching us? What is the next step we need to walk in?

First, ask God for a burden.

When we think about these projects we're doing - the worship center renovation, expansion at North Klein, expansion of our digital media and broadcast ministry, planting churches internationally, and a third campus in the Magnolia region - what I'm asking all of us to do is ask God to give us a burden.

But check this: It's not a burden for these projects. Just like Nehemiah, it wasn't a burden for the walls. It was a burden for what the walls represented. It's the people behind the projects.

I'm asking God to burden our hearts. I want you to pray, "God, would You burden my heart?"

Burden me for that young couple I'm never going to know who darkens the door at the North Klein campus. They're unchurched. They come into the church and drop their children off. They're looking for community, and when they try to find a life group, our people say, "You've got to go down to Fox Elementary, get back in your car, jump on the shuttle, and go half a mile." They're not on the same campus as their child.

That ought to burden us.

We don't want to be a people of convenience. We're not about convenience. We're about mission. But it ought to burden us that there are people who may say, "You know what? I don't feel comfortable with that." We've got to build because our ministry philosophy is on-campus groups.

I want us to feel for the thousands of people in the Magnolia region whom we may never know. We may never meet them personally, but they don't have a church, or maybe they're not saved. God's going to use us, Champion Forest, with this rich history of being in northwest Houston, to go to northwest Houston and take the gospel there.

Give us a burden for people we may never know.

There are 30 million people in Nepal and less than a 2 percent evangelical witness. That means there are only about 600,000 believers in the country of Nepal.

"God, burden our hearts that there aren't more believers. God, raise up church planters. Give us a burden."

Think about the broadcast ministry and the digital ministry. We've got friends watching online right now. At the 10:30 hour, we're on CBS Channel 11. We just started it last week.

Listen to this email we got last week. This is week one. Listen to this:

"Hey, Pastor Jarrett, I just wanted to share some encouragement. I hope this is encouraging to you, as it was to me. My parents watched the CBS show yesterday, and it's already changing our family.

"My parents, for the past few years, have really been struggling with their marriage, not prioritizing faith, and have been speaking of divorce. I've been earnestly praying that they would seek the Lord. When I told them that we'd be having a service on CBS, they were willing to watch to hear about the church that I'm at.

"They watched it together, and for the first time in probably five years, my parents spoke together about their faith. They both said they realized that they were not prioritizing the right things. They want to continue watching and are both wanting to seek the Lord in other ways.

"We may have only had the CBS segment going for a week, but I can already see it encouraging and bringing healing in my family. Thank you for leading by obedience."

Come on, man. Give us a burden, God. Give us a burden.

There are 2.9 million people in the greater Houston area. God, give us a burden for them. Weigh us down. Give us tears.

Donald Campbell, the commentator, said, "A burdened God is at work in the world. He searches for burdened believers through whom He may work."

A couple of weeks ago, we were in our staff advance, and we were talking about the series coming up. We were talking about the NEXT initiative, and I had a set of jumper cables. I just showed the team the set of jumper cables.

The reality is, for many, we may be talking about this and these projects, and there is no burden. If you were just very honest, the Holy Spirit granting you favor, there's nothing weighing on you. Your lost neighbors aren't keeping you up at night. Your lost friends at school - there's not an urgency to share the gospel there. There's just no burden.

All I know to do when there's not a burden is you've got to put the jumper cables on your heart. For Nehemiah, the jumper cables were prayer and fasting, giving up something that is natural in order to seek the supernatural.

Our staff, every Wednesday, has decided to do this. We started at the first of the year. We meet in our Revive Prayer Room for an hour, from 12:00 to 1:00. They're not made to participate, but if they choose to, we fast for the hour. We're seeking after God, and we're asking you to join us.

I'm telling you, more than a capital project and capital needs, this movement needs to be a spiritual movement. God, capture our hearts. Give me a burden.

Secondly, believe God can do anything. That's the next step.

Read Nehemiah's prayer in verse 5:

O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God.

— Nehemiah 1:5

Champion Forest, listen: Magnify our view of the Lord. He can do anything.

We've been talking about this \$38 million project. You were here last week, and the kids were all here like, "Woo!" All right, it's a big number. As a matter of fact, I've been talking about it for months, and it wasn't until last Sunday that I woke up with a little fear in my heart and thought, "Oh man, we're doing this."

But you know what? Thirty-eight million dollars to the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills? Are you kidding me? He owns a thousand oil rigs in West Texas.

This is our God. He can do anything, and we've got to believe Him for it.

Look at Nehemiah. Again, how did he get into this position? It was God working behind the scenes. He can do anything.

Where are we going to find land for a third campus? I don't know, but God could drop it on our doorstep tomorrow. He can do anything, and I'm calling on us to believe that.

Listen, some of you need God to move in your life, move in your marriage, or bring that wayward son or daughter home. Believe He can do it.

This is what Nehemiah shows us. This is what he teaches us. Let's choose to believe that our God can do anything. He's the great and awesome God of the universe.

Third and finally, prepare to act on faith.

Nehemiah's prayer life was getting him ready. It was preparing him to act on faith. We'll see him go to the king next week after four months of prayer.

Listen, if we take this seriously and we really pray and seek God, ask Him to give us a burden, and truly

believe that He can do anything, you'd better get ready to act on faith. God's going to begin turning your heart. He's going to be shifting your priorities. He's going to be getting all up in your business, and you're going to have to take it up with the Holy Spirit.

As we're learning in our Experiencing God study on Wednesdays - we have 350 people, and you're more than welcome to join us in the Family Life Center on Wednesday evenings at 6:45 to talk through Experiencing God - one of the realities we're learning is that when God's invitation comes for you to work with Him, when He brings you into that invitation, it always leads to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.

This is the start to something great, and I'm praying that we'll be ready to be the answer to our own prayers.

Amen.