

Commitment Sunday

Pastor Steven Morris

NEXT: From Northwest Houston to the World - NK | March 1, 2026 | Nehemiah 5:1-19; Nehemiah 6:1-19; Nehemiah 7:1-73

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

So, Chelsea and I had been married just over two years when Champion Forest entered into a generosity campaign, a capital initiative like we're in now. It was called Impact: For Him, For Every Generation. The goal was to raise money to build a student building, to build a kids building, and to build additional adult education space.

Listen, it was an exciting time for our church family. And for Chelsea and me, we'd been in church for quite some time, but this was the first time that we had been adults with jobs and had to make decisions about how we were going to use the finances God had entrusted to us.

I remember it well. We talked about it a lot. We prayed about it a lot. We read the Word. We learned. At the end of the day, this is what we learned: What we have belongs to the Lord. We hold it for a season, and we know that He has entrusted it to us for a reason.

It was a season in our lives when the Lord made it very clear that we needed to learn how to steward what He had entrusted to us for the glory of God, for the good of others, and for the advance of the gospel. That's it, right?

If you've ever wondered, "Why do I have what I have? Why has the Lord blessed me with all of these things?" That is it right there. You can trace it from the Old Testament to the New Testament of the Bible. That is a biblical worldview. And that biblical worldview on stewardship, I'm telling you, results in generosity.

Generosity, by the way, is a major theme in the efforts of Nehemiah and the people of God as they seek restoration in Jerusalem. We see it in Nehemiah chapters 5, 6, and 7. We're going to look at all three this morning.

If you've got your Bible, open up to Nehemiah chapter 5. As you're opening, just know that our prayer is that, as we study, we would learn how to steward what we have for the glory of God, the good of others, and the advance of the gospel. If you're taking notes, that's our title: "The Glory of God, the Good of Others, and the Advance of the Gospel."

Look with me now, starting in Nehemiah 5:14. Here's what the Bible says:

Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor.

The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.

I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work.

Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us.

Now what was prepared at my expense for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people.

Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.

— Nehemiah 5:14-19

Generosity Flows From a God-Sized View

Our first point this morning builds off what we studied last week: Generosity flows from a God-sized view.

Last week, Nehemiah was in the middle of this project that God had called him to. When he encountered opposition or distraction, what did he say?

I am doing a great work and I cannot come down.

— Nehemiah 6:3

"I can't stop."

Nehemiah knew that greatness wasn't defined by size, scope, or scale. Greatness is defined by purpose. His entire purpose for being in Jerusalem, on the wall, and in the years that followed - we see a 12-year period highlighted here - was great because it was about the spiritual well-being of others and the glory of God.

Because Nehemiah lived with a God-sized view of his life in Jerusalem, he lived with great generosity. He is this picture for us this morning of an open hand, holding what God had entrusted to him loosely and allowing God to use it how He saw fit.

Don't miss this: When we live with a God-sized view of our work, when we know we're called to great things for God and, because of that, live with generous and open hands, we're going to look different from a lot of people around us.

Chapter 5 makes the point that while Nehemiah's predecessors used their positions to enrich themselves at the expense of the people, Nehemiah did the opposite. Nehemiah didn't take. It says it right here in chapter 5. He did not take what he rightfully could have. Earlier in chapter 5, he stood up for the poor. Instead of taking from others, look at what he did here: He expanded his table to feed those who were in need.

Unlike the governors who were there before him, he knew that God had him there for the advancement of the

glory of God and for the well-being of others. So he lived like it. He ensured that his resources and his money were spent like it.

Here we see that he's feeding 150 people per day. Have you been grocery shopping recently? Can you imagine that? If you were feeding 150 people per day, do you know how many pounds of food we'd go through at our house? I can't imagine. Our H-E-B would not be able to keep up with a couple of Nehemiahs in the neighborhood.

Look at the math here. If we do that math, we're talking about 4,000 oxen and over 26,000 sheep. This is an intentional display in the text of generosity. He is living with a God-sized view because he has a God-sized purpose, and he shows that he believes he is responsible before God for using what he has to advance the kingdom of God.

Does he give everything away? No, he doesn't, and that's okay.

Remember Luke 19. There's this story where Jesus meets a man named Zacchaeus. If you remember Zacchaeus, what do you know about him? He was a wee little man, right? We don't have to sing the song, but he's the short guy. He's up in the tree because he wants a glimpse of Jesus as Jesus passes by.

Jesus sees him and knows that He needs to spend some time with Zacchaeus. So, much to the dismay of the religious leaders of the day, He has dinner with Zacchaeus at his house that night.

Zacchaeus encounters Jesus. He surrenders his life to Jesus. He believes that Jesus is Lord. He is the Messiah, the One whom God had sent. He has this encounter with Jesus, and everything changes in him, including how he views what he has.

He had become a rich man. He was a crooked man, and that crookedness made him rich. After that encounter with Jesus, he pledged to give away, not all that he had, but half of what he had to the poor and to those who were in need.

You look at Jesus standing by as Zacchaeus makes this declaration, and Jesus says, "He's got it right. It's clicked. He understands what's going on here." In fact, Jesus said:

Today salvation has come to this house.

— Luke 19:9

Zacchaeus encounters the Lord, and what happens? His generous actions begin to display the heart of our generous Savior.

Just like Nehemiah, Zacchaeus realized there's something much greater than money and food. It's love for people and faith in God. He learned that there's a higher, better, and more enjoyable life found in the treasures of heaven than in the simple pleasures of this earth.

That's a lesson for all of us. We need to learn it. We need to know how to steward what we have for the glory of God, the good of others, and the advance of the gospel.

Nehemiah learned the lesson. He made sacrifices personally, and I want you to think about what his personal sacrifices did for the work. His sacrifice allowed the work to proceed for the glory of God. His sacrifices benefited others greatly. His sacrifices benefited people who would never be able to repay him, people who would never be able to give back to him.

That's the point, right? His sacrifice advanced the kingdom of God among the nations. He had a God-sized view of the work, and it gave him a generous heart. The same thing is true of us. Don't we have a God-sized view of the work?

Generosity Accelerates the Work

That leads to our second point this morning: Generosity accelerates the work.

Look at chapter 6 now. Verse 15 says:

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.

And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

— Nehemiah 6:15-16

Here's a phrase I want you to write down if you're taking notes, and write it down like I write it: "Look what happened when they did it TOGETHER." "Together" is in all caps there. I have it in all caps here. Write "TOGETHER" in all caps on your page.

That's the point. Nehemiah is intentional in writing this book that the work was done together. Every single one of them was involved, and because of that, the wall was done in 52 days. That's less than two months.

Go back to chapters 1 and 2. We remember that Nehemiah prayed for four months before the project even got off the ground. Do you know what that math tells me? Four months of prayer, two months or less of work. It's this: We can do more with God in a moment than we can do in a lifetime on our own.

Do not underestimate what God can accomplish when His people are in it together, when His people are unified.

If we flip back to chapter 3 to look at the work being done, we'd read this phrase, "next to him," over 30 times. Remember, this guy worked right here on this section of the wall, and then next to him, this guy and his family worked on this section of the wall. Then next to him, this group of brothers worked on this section of the wall.

More than 30 times, we read, "next to him," and we can trace it on a map all the way around the wall, all the way around the city. The entire point of outlining that was that there was this group of people called by God to a great work. They locked arms together, and everyone had a section.

Some people had massive sections of the wall, with gates and everything else that they had to accomplish. Other people had smaller sections of the wall they had to accomplish. Every single part of the wall was important if the wall was going to do what it was supposed to do. Everybody stepped up and did what they

could. They all worked. They all sacrificed until the job was completed.

I want you to look at verse 16 one more time. What happens when it's completed? Their enemies heard, and all the nations were afraid. They fell greatly in their own esteem. Why?

For they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

— Nehemiah 6:16

The nations aren't talking about Nehemiah. They're not talking about the high priest here. They're not talking about one of the families who did one of the gates. They're not talking about a group of brothers who repaired a really, really broken-down portion of the wall. They're talking about the Lord. They're lifting high the name of God.

Here's the lesson for me and you as we step into this next chapter as a church family: When God's people are fully invested, not just financially but wholeheartedly, the pace of what God does is remarkable, and it becomes a testimony to the world around us.

We've talked about sacrificial giving. It's not just about funding a specific project. It's about participating in something that points people to God. That's our prayer.

Look at the different elements of Nehemiah's project here. The people had a God-sized view because they knew they were doing something great. They worked. They sacrificed. And who got the glory? God got the glory.

But here's what we can't forget: As they worked, God was at work on behalf of His people the entire time. Nehemiah told us in chapter 2:8 - I love this phrase:

And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

— Nehemiah 2:8

In chapter 2:12, he tells us that God was working in his heart. In chapter 2:20, he tells us:

The God of heaven will make us prosper.

— Nehemiah 2:20

In chapter 4:15, when the enemies were surrounding them and threatening to kill them, God was the One who stepped in and frustrated their plan. In chapter 4:20, Nehemiah said:

Our God will fight for us.

— Nehemiah 4:20

And now the wall is done. But we can't forget that the entire time, as the people worked, gave, and sacrificed, God was at work among His people. His good hand was on them.

As we step into this next chapter, we're praying constantly that God would be at work in and through every single part of our church family and that His hand would be on us.

Chapter 6 is a great moment for Nehemiah and the people. After all the opposition, after all the sacrifice, and after all the work, they're able to recognize that the hand of God saw them through to get the wall done.

Put points one and two together. Generosity flows from a God-sized view. When we have a God-sized view, an eternal perspective on what's going on, generosity flows. And that same generosity accelerates what's possible.

Generosity Displays Faith in Something Greater Than Ourselves

Finally, our third point - we can't miss this - is that same generosity displays faith in something greater than ourselves. It displays faith in something bigger than each one of us.

In Nehemiah, we see the people gathered in chapter 7. Flip to chapter 7. I'm going to read a portion of it in a minute, but I'm going to tell you ahead of time what we're learning here so that you can be processing what's going on as we read.

We're going to read about how all the people gave, and they gave generously. I want you to know that their giving displayed faith in what God was doing. It displayed faith in one another and their faith community, and it displayed faith in the future God was going to build among them.

Look at Nehemiah 7, all the way down to verse 70. It says this:

Now some of the heads of fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 basins, 30 priests' garments and 500 minas of silver.

And some of the heads of fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver.

And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests' garments.

— Nehemiah 7:70-72

Those three verses have a lot of numbers and a lot of gold. Scholars estimate that more than \$5 million worth of gold was given at that time. I don't know how to adjust that for inflation, but I want to make sure that we know exactly what's happening.

If your Bible is open and you look at the rest of chapter 7, the first 69 verses of the chapter are a census. It's not a genealogy list. It's a census of the people who left Persia to come back to Jerusalem to do this great work.

It's actually first recorded by Ezra in Ezra chapter 2. They came back originally, and it's written down here again in Nehemiah. It takes down who was there, who was doing the work, and how they all gave, participated, and pitched in together. It's recorded twice in Scripture to give honor to this group of people and what they did, all for the kingdom of God.

I want to highlight what it says in verse 71:

Gave into the treasury of the work.

— Nehemiah 7:71

Underline or circle that phrase if you write in your Bible: "the treasury of the work." They didn't give to Ezra. They didn't give to Nehemiah. They gave to what is called "the treasury of the work."

That's talking about the ongoing restoration projects in the city of Jerusalem. It means the wall. It means the reestablishment of the temple as a place of worship in Jerusalem. All the people were on different levels, and they gave as they were able, contributing to a great work of God that was ultimately about what? The spiritual well-being of others and the lifting high of the name of God among the nations.

It was about so much more than brick, so much more than stone.

As they gave, look at what they were doing. They were displaying great faith in what God was doing among His people in Jerusalem. They would not have given if they didn't believe in the mission and what God was up to.

Their gifts displayed great faith in one another and in the community they were building there in that city that had been abandoned. They gathered together to worship the Lord. Finally, their giving displayed great faith in the future, with high expectations for what God had next for them.

They knew that Jerusalem was worth investing in once again after all these years because they knew the promises of God were true.

When it was time for them to give, I want you to look at who is mentioned first. The leaders are mentioned first. Nehemiah has shown, throughout this entire book up until now, that he's willing to sacrifice and give of his own for the sake of the Lord and others along this entire journey.

Here in Nehemiah 7:70-73, we see the leaders giving first, the governor giving first, and the heads of households giving first in an act of generosity.

I mentioned this last week, and I'll mention it again. A few weeks ago, our staff team followed the same pattern. The leaders here set the pace. They didn't want to ask the people of Israel to give to something they weren't invested in as well. It's the same for our staff.

A couple of weeks ago in our staff chapel, we gathered, as we do once a month, and we worshiped, prayed, and sought the Lord together as a staff between both of our campuses and our English and Spanish teams. It's a really meaningful time of worship.

In that time of worship, we had a moment when we worshiped together by giving our offerings and our NEXT commitments together as a staff team. During a moment of worship, we came forward, just like we're going to ask our church family to do here in a few minutes, and we laid our commitments in the baskets that were on the altar. It was an act of worship before the Lord, following the pattern we see here.

I love the thread of generosity, sacrifice, and giving that flows through Nehemiah, where we see that ultimately it displays their faith. In the same way, our generosity displays our faith in what God is up to and in what God

has called us to.

These past few weeks, I've had so many conversations with our church family about NEXT, with so many people who are excited. The number one question I've gotten is, "How can I give?" The number two question I've gotten is, "When can I give?"

I hope this encourages you, but I just want to let you know that I've had so many conversations with people in our church family who, with NEXT, are for the first time going to be giving some of the resources God has entrusted to them for the glory of God, for the good of others, and for the advance of the gospel.

As we've talked to so many, here's what I know, and we see it in Nehemiah here: We're not giving just to pay for construction. This is an act of faith that says this church family, this work God has called us to, and this future are worth investing in.

Three Questions

There's so much more we could say about chapters 5, 6, and 7, but as we wrap up, let me ask you three questions as our application this morning.

Question number one is from chapter 5: Will you give with a God-sized view of the work, knowing that He's called us to something great?

Chapter 6: Will you give generously so that the pace of the work reflects the power of God to those around us? Not so that people talk about us, but so that people talk about the Lord and what He's up to.

Then chapter 7: Will you invest in what God is building here in our church family, in this next chapter of our church family?

We've gotten a lot of notes from people in our church. I want to read one that was sent in a couple of weeks ago at our Champions Campus. Listen to what God's doing in the heart of this family.

This man writes, "I moved to the Klein area from South Houston in 1996. I started attending Champion Forest with my dad in late 1996. When I turned 16, I was given a job working in the Family Life Center from 1997 to 1999. I worked the front desk of a gym, where I met so many amazing believers who impacted my walk with the Lord.

"I attended every summer youth camp in Panama City, where I made friends and brothers in Christ for life. I met my wife in 1999 at the newly constructed student building. Later, in 2004, we were married in the newly constructed chapel.

"I'm sure each of these buildings had a capital campaign or generosity initiative associated with it. I know that I was sponsored to attend youth camps by generous, anonymous givers. Thank God for the faithful and giving members of Champion Forest, that they said yes to the call and the vision and the mission.

"Their yes got me a job in high school. It grew my faith. It surrounded me with godly friends. It introduced me to my wife, ultimately leading me to marry her 22 years ago. We - me and my family - we are in."

God's been at work in the hearts and lives of so many people as we've sought Him in the midst of this.

We know, as we read Nehemiah, that Nehemiah's people didn't just give to a building campaign. They gave because they believed Jerusalem was worth it. They believed God was in it.

Like them, we're not just giving toward a campaign. We're giving for what? The glory of God, the good of others, and the advance of the gospel.

Would you pray with me this morning?

Bow your head this morning. Just go before the Lord and ask Him to help teach you, or to help keep it front of mind when it comes to stewardship and generosity, that all we have is for the glory of God, for the good of others, and for the advance of the gospel.

Father, we know that. God, I pray that every day You'd remind us that all we have is Yours, and we want to use it in a way that brings glory and honor to You. It's in Your name we pray. Amen.

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We would love the opportunity to get to know you. To connect with us, just go to championforest.org/connect. We're so glad you joined us today, and we'll see you again next time.