

MORNING STAR

MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

presents
VBS 2022



INTRODUCTION

In December of 2019, a plague broke out upon the earth. It was the beginning of COVID-19, a worldwide pandemic that would kill millions of people.

No one knew how it would impact the world, our parents' jobs, our churches, or our schools. We had to wear masks while scientists rushed to find a vaccine.

When it came to the church, many had to close their doors. Some churches refused to close their doors and some of their members became sick and died, as well as some of the pastors. Were we right to shut our doors, or were we wrong?

The churches that closed their doors were standing on the Word of God. The Bible tells us,

*¹ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. ² Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. **Romans 13:1-2 (KJV)***

This verse tells us as believers that we are to obey our governing authorities. This refers to both the church and the world. The pastor of the church, the police officer that pulls you over, the teacher in your classroom, the judge in the court, the mayor of the city, the governor of the state, the leader of the country, all of them are in positions of authority and God's will is that we submit ourselves to the higher powers (*provided they do not tell us to do something that goes directly against the Word of God*).

Our problem today is that it is more “exciting” to choose not to obey, and to resist being told what we can and cannot do! This same mentality has permeated the church and is changing the church in a way that God never intended. Why have we begun to resist? The Bible has an answer for that.

*Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law. **Proverbs 29:18 (NIV)***

The church was once the physical center of every city and town, but now it has been removed from the center of town and pushed to the outskirts along with its beliefs and purpose. But Proverbs 29:18 said specifically, “*where there is no revelation...*” So, what is meant by “revelation”? The King James Version translates that word as “vision”.

*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. **Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)***

The word vision means that every Christian can clearly see where the church is headed, and where God is leading us. But you also need to know that it is not good to begin saying to oneself, “But we are under grace and do not need to obey the Law”. While it is true that we are under grace, the Law of God is still necessary to lead us to grace. We need to know that we **MUST** be born again! The Bible says, born again not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. And can you guess what is perfect at converting the soul or causing one to know they need Jesus’ salvation?

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. Psalm 19:7 (KJV)

Yes, it is God's Law. What law? The Law is more than just the Ten Commandments. The Law is contained in the first five books of the Bible (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*). The Law convicts us of our sins and helps us to realize our need for God's grace. Do you remember what the Bible says about us being saved?

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV)

When we have decided to no longer obey our parents, when we refuse to let anybody teach us about God's Word and how God wants us to live, we will feel we have no need for Him, His Word, nor His grace in our life! We will have no desire to go to Bible Study, Sunday School, or church services. We will even give our parents attitude when they tell us to get up and get ready for church. When we act like this, we're already telling God we have no need of Him in our life. The church, the Word of God, the choir, the preacher, and all that stuff is just **NOT** important to "**ME**".

How many parents pray for their children to be saved? How many children have already decided that when they get out the house to live on their own, they will **NEVER** go to church again? What is the message **YOU** have learned about going to church? The only one who will be happy about you not going to church is the devil.

So how does God get us back to the church? Will it take another school shooting only this time it happens at your school and you are the one being shot at? Because as bad as some kids **THINK** they are, once it's their life in somebody else's hands, everything changes. And while some kids will "act" tough for their reputation's sake, how do you "act" tough when the one trying to kill you is cancer, or COVID?

Was COVID a wakeup call for all of humanity? It has affected everyone. At first the health experts thought children were in no danger but look at it now! Why would God allow this to happen if He is supposed to be so loving? WAIT A MINUTE! Let's flip the script! Do **YOU** love God? Many will say yes but what they really mean is that they love God so long as He does what they want. And before you say that's not true of you, let me ask the question this way. Do you really love your mom and dad when you ask for something you really want and they say no? Look at what Jesus said...

If you love me, show it by doing what I've told you. John 14:15 (MSG)

What we **REALLY** want is for God to show **US** that He loves **US** by doing whatever **WE ASK HIM** to do! And to be perfectly honest, there is a way for you to have that, but what we have to do to get it is where we so often fail! Here is the requirement in summary...

- We **MUST** be saved.
- We **MUST** walk with Him allowing Him to direct our paths.
- We **MUST** always obey Him.
- We **MUST** ask in faith believing we will receive.
- We **CANNOT** ask selfishly.

Do those things **ALL THE TIME** and you got it! But fail in any part and you will have none of it!

After the churches were able to reopen, we ran into a new problem. A lot of people did not return to church. Now they have church via Social Media. Any child who didn't like going to church was happier now if their parents decided they are not going back yet, or ever again. But here's a good question for you to consider, could God be cleaning out His church of those members who really don't want to be there? Is He preparing His church for the rapture when He will come and take those who are saved away with Him? Not yet, because there are still things, we call prophecy, that must be fulfilled!

What we need to do now is REBUILD! We need to sit down and talk about our ministry, take our ministries apart and put them back together, examining what worked and fixing what is not working! I believe we have been blessed to have the opportunity to build new ministries and make things better for the church and for God's people!

QUESTIONS:

1. How do you believe COVID has affected the church and you?
2. Do you believe there is a need to make our Youth Ministry better here at Morning Star?
3. Do you have any ideas you wish to share to make things better? (Youth outings? Youth retreats? Going to plays? Going to parks?)

LESSON 1

What do You Mean, Rebuild?

When we are introduced to Nehemiah, he is living and working at the palace of King Artaxerxes as the king's cupbearer. He is visited by one of his brethren and certain men from Judah. When he asked how his brothers and sisters who had come back to Jerusalem from captivity and of the state of the city, the answer caused him to sit down and weep. He then was sad certain days, fasted, and prayed to God.

What broke his heart was how he saw God in relation to the things of God. He knew God is awesome and anything that bears His name or is of any relation to Him should also be awesome. But Jerusalem was in ruins, and the people who were there were suffering. All this broke Nehemiah's heart.

In similarity to Nehemiah's heart, our hearts should be affected by the current state of the church today. So many churches are struggling in a bad way to keep their youth involved. And while some will sit back and say to themselves, "God is not going to let His church fail!", please wake up and realize who He has left to care for His church! He has not appointed angels to clean the church, repair any broken instruments, to pay the bills and restock needed supplies, so that you can just come on Sunday and all things are decent and in working order and to your liking. He left His church in all our hands to supply and to do all things necessary.

Many cannot begin to understand the depth of the peril when 80% of the church has been supported by 20% of the people. To better understand this, look at the chart below.



The 80/20 rule says that for every ten people, two give generously enough so that the church is able to serve ten people, including the two who gave. But now that COVID has come, 80/20 is more like 90/10! Do we care? Are we concerned? Are our hearts not stirred like Nehemiah's?

Morning Star used to have youth ushers. We would have 7 ushers on the floor on Sundays using hand signals to communicate. Guess how many children ushers we have in training now? We had 5 choirs and now we have 2 with dwindling numbers! While it's true many have grown up, moved away, or relocated, the church must go on! So many became used to others doing things for them and making sure things were proper and in place until now we don't remember how to do certain things, or we never learned.

That's why **NOW** is the time to rebuild! That's why **NOW** is the time to be trained and to join in and to help! What is it we need to do? We need to rebuild the wall that is Morning Star! Only this time we build it better! This is not our friend's church, or our neighbor's church, this is **OUR OWN** church and she needs us **ALL** to help.

Nehemiah spent a lot of time in prayer before acting which is one reason why the Hour of Power ministry has been brought back. How do you think it would look to God if the youth showed up to pray for 1 hour **EVERY** Sunday morning? Some are already saying, "I can't pray for a whole hour!", but you will never know until you try. Once you get into it, you will discover that an hour is not

enough time because there is so much to pray for. And we will help you to know the things to pray for. Ok pastor, but pray for one hour? Yes! The Bible says...

...for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Isaiah 56:7 (KJV)

How do we do this you might ask? Nehemiah first repented of his own sins and then he acted as an intercessor for the sins of Israel, confessing and repented for the people he cared so much about. He also prayed about a way to do something about the situation and for the favor of God before the king. Like Nehemiah we to can pray for the people to return as well as for God to send us new members. We can pray for more deacons, more trustees, more choir members, and so forth, for every ministry of the church. But here's the catch! If God answers us and they come to the same old things as before, do you think they will stay or they will leave?

One problem I saw with the youth ministry was the lack of input from the youth. So, I approached the youth one day and asked them if they would like to go on a retreat? One where they could get away from the church and spend the night at a retreat facility and have some fun along with some class time for instruction. The response was an overwhelming YES! And Morning Star made sure money was put in place in the budget for the youth to have a retreat.

I was fighting for the youth of the church and what they said they wanted! Someone else evidently felt they knew better what the youth wanted, and in their opinion, it was not a retreat! I shared this to say the youth ought to have input into what their ministry will do! Otherwise, they will lose interest and not want to participate.

Be bold enough to ask, bold enough to speak up and say, “Can we as a youth ministry do _____.” and you fill in the blank. When you speak up your youth advisors will listen.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12 (KJV)

You may not know it but you have parents, youth advisors, and a pastor who fight for you so that you can do things and go some places and have some fun.

Rebuilding starts in all our hearts and evidence is shown in our hands and our feet and our giving. And remember our giving includes our time, our talent, and our tithe.

It’s time we sit down, take an inventory, and ask the tough questions. We need to question everything. What is our purpose? How are we fulfilling our purpose? Are we growing or are we shrinking? What standards have we set and are we keeping them? Do we all get along? Is there any quarrelling within or over how or when or where we do things?

QUESTIONS:

1. Are you willing to help your youth ministry grow?
2. Are you willing to put in the time it will take?
3. Are you willing to offer suggestions?
4. What are some of your suggestions?

LESSON 2

Working With Rubble

When Nehemiah inspected the Walls of Jerusalem, he found the walls torn down and the gates burned with fire. These were the materials Nehemiah had to work with, beside the timber from the king's forest that king Artaxerxes had given to Nehemiah to use in rebuilding the wall. Can you imagine trying to build a wall with rubble? Can you imagine trying to build a youth ministry with rubble? If we go back to building the way things were built before, we can expect the same results as before. If the adults sit down without any youth involvement, we can expect the same results. But if the adults ask the youth to come out and participate, then it's vital that the youth show up and participate. But the fact is only a few **MIGHT** show up, and all they will have to work with is rubble.

The youth ministry will be what the youth make it! No more and no less! It's not that the teenagers have all the say so, but that everyone has a voice. Since we can't do things like take a flight on Elon Musk's Rocketship into space, we have to look at things we can do. The question is are **YOU** willing to help? Because the wall must be rebuilt.

We must begin by asking the question, "What is meant by rubble?" According to the website dictionary.com, rubble is broken bits and pieces of anything, as that which is demolished. The church is not brick and wood and cement, it's flesh and blood. But how is it that we as people can be considered as rubble? Do you remember the centurion whose daughter had died in the Bible? Let's take a look at something he said as well as something Paul said that I believe will help us to understand.

*The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof... **Matthew 8:8a (KJV)***

*For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **1 Corinthians 15:9 (NIV)***

The centurion was a soldier in charge of other soldiers. He did not profess himself to be a deeply religious man, but as a soldier he had killed other men in battle. He knew where he stood in relation to God and the things he should and should not do. He knew he was a sinner.

As for Paul, he used to persecute Christians and put them in jail. He knew he was wrong for doing so and therefore also knew that he was a sinner.

The point I am trying to make is that all of us are broken because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Therefore, the church is comprised of broken people, and **WE ALL** are as the rubble Nehemiah and the Jews had to build with. Torn down by the world and beaten by the storms of life, but they took what they had and built! **And so shall we!** So don't count yourself out, count yourself in!

A lot of times we do not consider things because we don't believe in it, or we don't believe a certain person is capable, or we don't like this person or that one. We are setting ourselves up for failure whenever we doubt the ability of God! The work necessary to build the wall would demonstrate the people's faith in God. They just needed to believe in order to start the work and remain faithful to the end to complete the work. Granted it was no small task but imagine how inspired they were by seeing how quickly the wall came together as everyone

worked beside each other, and others were pitching in elsewhere when their part was complete!

We must also have that kind of faith! Faith to start the process and faith to see it through to completion. Therefore, we shall take our broken pieces and build because **THE FOUNDATION HAS NOT CHANGED!** Halleluiah! And what good is a wall if the foundation is not established?

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11 (KJV)

And so, they built the wall! They began by clearing away the rubble and then reorganizing it as they rebuilt the wall layer by layer. First, they laid the outline of what would be the length and width of the wall, then they filled in between, organizing more of the rubble. The exterior (*what people would see*) was supported and strengthened by the interior (*what people would not see*). That says in every ministry there will be people who are visibly seen as workers, but behind them will be people who also support the ministry but are not seen. All are necessary for the success of any ministry.

Permit me to give an example. When the choir sings a song with a lead singer, a lot of people focus on the lead singer complimenting that person on how well **THEY** sing. But there is a choir behind them singing in the background who never receive compliments. The song would not be what it is if not for **ALL** the voices supporting the soloist. So it is with ministry, you may not get to hear nor receive the compliments, but God knows everything everyone is doing. Your compliments may come later when you appear before the judgment seat and are rewarded for your faithfulness.

To rebuild our youth ministry let us first examine how the wall was built. In building the exterior portions (*what would be the outer sides of the wall*) and then strengthening the whole wall by back-filling with both large and smaller pieces of rubble, the wall would rise level by level as defined by the size of the rubble. And even though it was rubble, the rubble was organized to fit tightly together. And the Bible says all the people worked as one. If you examine the picture to the right, you will see the woman walking on top of what is believed to be a historical portion of Nehemiah's wall. You can see how broad the base is and how it was built up layer by layer. The base had to be able to support the weight of the wall, while its width added strength and stability.



Therefore, we must build the same way. First laying down the structure or framework of our respective ministries and the rules binding it together (*like an outline*), then back-filling with willing members until we too are strong and ready to handle the work. The more members we have participating translates into the work load the ministry will be able to handle. Right now, we have ministries with only a set few people doing all the work. (Remember the example of the 80/20 rule?) As the workers wear themselves down, they are not able to take a break. What happens next is the workers can become short tempered, easily angered, stressed out, and before you know it, they don't want to do the work anymore. Please hear this, even Jesus told the disciples to come

apart with Him and get some rest! The more depth a ministry has, the better it will be at handling heavy workloads. Depth is often defined as the number of participants willing to help.

But wait! We must also have our focus on the community! And how will we incorporate that aspect into our ministries? I believe doing so will be easier than most people think. Nehemiah included everyone in the effort to rebuild the wall. Some worked directly on the wall while others supported those who worked and their families. It was paramount that the work continue because their enemies were lurking about.

We can include the community by informing them of what we are doing (*youth sponsored programs such as fun trips, events such as worship in the park or having our Christmas Cantata, or just friendly reminders to join us for worship as examples*).

No youth of the church should be left out or turned away. Some have the desire but don't possess the know-how. That person may need to be trained in what to do. But everyone will have to work together as one church.

QUESTIONS:

1. What happens when one person is the only one planning the ministry? Why does this style of ministry discourage most from participating?
2. How hard is it to work with rubble?
3. Did working with rubble hinder Nehemiah and the Jews efforts to rebuild the wall?
4. Are you willing to help rebuild our youth ministry and make it better for the other youth coming after you? How?

LESSON 3

Opposition

Have you ever noticed that in ministry, whenever you start to do a good work, the enemy always seems to show up to try and hinder the work? When Nehemiah first arrived at Jerusalem, the enemy was already taking notice. Sanballat and Tobiah were quick to resent his arrival even though they did not yet know what he was doing there. Isn't that something?! They don't even know him and they already resent him! But since he arrived with an escort and ample supplies, they paid very close attention and began to inquire.

As soon as they understood why Nehemiah had come, they began to spread threats and negative comments...

But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

Nehemiah 2:19 (KJV)

Has that ever happened to you? You are a new student at a new school and some of the other students don't like you even though they have never met you? Or perhaps it was the other way around, a new student and as soon as you saw them you didn't like them? Opposition can come in various forms and ways, but opposition must always have a voice! Someone who is willing to echo the words of the only one who still desires to put an end to anything God wants to do. Did you know that Satan was once an anointed cherub (angel) until sin was found in him? The sin that caused his downfall was the sin of pride.

*¹⁴ Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. ¹⁵ Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. **Ezekiel 28:14-15 (KJV)***

Yes, Satan's fall was great as he was stripped of his glory. While we're here let's get one thing straight. Satan does not run around in a red outfit with horns on his head and a pointed tail and carrying a pitchfork. The Bible says he was covered with every precious stone, and the workmanship of his tabrets and his pipes was equally beautiful. But when he tried to make his own throne and set it above God's throne, God cast him out of Heaven. He fell to earth and Jesus testified as a witness to this event. Look at what Jesus said...

*And he said unto them, **I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.***

Luke 10:18 (KJV)

The "lightning" was his glory being stripped away as he fell. So, what does the devil do now? Let's allow him to speak for himself to answer that question. One day the sons of God were gathered before Him, and Satan appeared with them...

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. **Job 1:7 (KJV)***

Peter also described the devil who is our adversary this way...

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

There you have it! This is the true source of all our temptations, trials, and oppositions. He just needs someone to work through and in the case of Nehemiah, he found Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, the army of Samaria, and even a few Jews who were keeping the enemy informed. We will talk about that later.

Sanballat was the chief spokesman for the opposition. He did not want to see Jerusalem's wall rebuilt, nor the Jews come together. He immediately began a discouragement campaign against Nehemiah and the Jews. His plan was simple. They laughed at what the Jews were doing, they despised them, and they began to question what they were doing. Let's examine the purpose of each step.

1. Laughter –

This type of laughter is designed to cause scorn in the ears of the hearer. It is a laughter that says what you are doing is senseless and ignorant.

Whenever you put your mind to do something, it never feels good when someone laughs at what you're doing as if you are dumb for doing it.

2. Despised –

This word means to be careless towards another, to treat as unworthy or with hatred. Sanballat and his friends did not like the Jews because of the work they were doing. They had just as well knocked it all down again.

3. Questioning –

When someone doubts you or your ability, they will question everything you do. Their intent is to fill Nehemiah and the workers heads with doubt.

Everybody will face external opposition. Let me ask you this question, have your plans to be good and faithful to God ever been frustrated? If you say they have, that's normal and a compliment to the goodness of your plans. But if you say they haven't then I'm a little worried because they might not be good enough and the devil sees no need to bother your plans to serve Him. The only plans the devil tries to disrupt are the ones that draw us nearer to God or will win souls to Christ. Have you ever planned to start attending Sunday School and then suddenly your parent's car will not start, or the phone rings and it's urgent and it makes you and your parents late? Well, the devil's number one plan is to keep you from getting close to God.

The enemies of Israel started out with verbal threats, but soon moved to slander, intimidation and threatening with weapons. We must learn how to overcome intimidation. Nehemiah responded to their attempts at intimidating him by turning the battle over to the Lord. Look at what he said...

*Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. **Nehemiah 2:20 (KJV)***

In this answer, Nehemiah shows them that their strength, their determination, and their motivation comes from the God of Israel. Sanballat and his cohorts already have familiarity with the God of Israel from history. He further says that they will obey God and that their threats mean nothing because they are not a part of God's nor Nehemiah's plan. Therefore, Nehemiah can ignore them because he knows the Lord will defend them.

Sanballat and Tobiah keep up their plan of ridiculing the Jews. Only now they speak to those who side with them (*Geshem & the army of Samaria*) with questions designed to force their friends to agree with them. Look at Sanballat's questions...

... "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble--burned as they are?" **Nehemiah 4:2 (NIV)**

Then Tobiah adds his words of insult...

...Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. **Nehemiah 4:3 (KJV)**

Nehemiah heard what they said and he immediately prayed to God for their insults to be turned back on their own heads, and for God to deal with them as he and the Jews continued to work on the wall.

But Nehemiah would also find out that there was opposition to what God was doing among the Jews. Internal opposition can be very painful! We all know that God had forbidden the Jews to marry foreign wives, or to allow their daughters to marry foreign men. At the time of Nehemiah rebuilding the wall, there were some Jews who had married daughters of their enemies.

Tobiah was married to the daughter of Shecaniah, who was one of Nehemiah's key workers. And his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam who was one of Nehemiah's supervisors in the building project. Tobiah was also closely related the High Priest Eliashib. These family ties might allow Tobiah to ask and find out everything Nehemiah is planning, as well as how

the building project is going. And we already know where Tobiah's loyalties lie. He has sided with the enemy.

As a pastor with over 25 years of experience, I can say it hurts deeply when a friend betrays you. Let us all be aware of anyone who runs out and tells everything about us, speaking down of us. Yet when they are with you, they never say those things to your face. They are what one might call a rift maker, someone who wants to cause division and chaos.

Like Nehemiah, we must all remain prayed up. We don't know when or where the challenges will come. But dealing with them is paramount to the success of all our efforts. We should follow Nehemiah's example of faith and reliance upon God and remain determined to do things God's way and not our own. Many churches today are what we would term family churches. So many within are family members or else related to the family. And what "the family" says goes, even over the Word of God unfortunately sometimes.

But God is able to deal with opposition if we just pray and turn it all over to Him. I'm a living witness that He will because it was my family that opposed me on more than one occasion. But standing on God's Word worked because it will accomplish the purpose for which it has been sent.

QUESTIONS:

1. When you are dealing with issues of who is in control, what kind of spirit are you really dealing with?
2. How should one handle opposition?
3. In turning opposition over to God, are we done with it and don't need to do anything else?
4. Should we fear families and family ties within God's house?

LESSON 4

Facing Intimidation

People who pursue control will often use that control to pressure others into doing what they want. Using control to create pressure is an effective way to get **AT** people. When others are not sure of themselves or what they are doing, they are way more likely to give in to control because of fear. But if the objects of intimidation are confident in their task (*not fearing*), intimidation may well fail.

Nehemiah had spent so much time in prayer with God until he was very confident in what God wanted him to do. God had already affirmed Nehemiah's plans by granting him favor with king Artaxerxes. Could intimidation work on him? Let's see!

When Sanballat heard that Nehemiah and the Jews continued to build the wall, he became very angry! The Bible says...

...he was angry, and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews.

Nehemiah 4:1b (NIV)

Nehemiah and the Jews worked hard, and their coordinated effort produced fast results. The wall reached half its height in just a few weeks. But their enemies were also growing in number. In addition to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and the army of Samaria, they now had the attention of the Ammonites and the Ashdodites. All these enemies began to work together to attack Jerusalem, stop the work, and destroy all the progress the Jews had made!

Why is it that when people see ministries growing, someone tries to step in and take **CONTROL** of everything being done? Do they just want to be seen? Are

they only after public recognition? A controlling spirit is a witchcraft spirit. Don't think of a woman riding a broom with a black hat and black dress! Because if you have that image, you will miss seeing through whom the witchcraft spirit is working. Always remember, our task is to free any soul being controlled by an evil spirit, without driving that member away. This can be a difficult task, but we can always look to Jesus for our example of how He dealt with people who were demon possessed.

Intimidation's goal is to stop you in what you're doing and take control. Especially when what you are doing **IS** in line with the Word of God! And to do that, intimidation must cause you to fear. Let's look at one example of intimidation and what it tried to do to Nehemiah. In Nehemiah chapter 5, there came a great cry of the Jews against some of their brethren! What in the world could be going on?

² Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain." ³ Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine." ⁴ Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. ⁵ Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."

Nehemiah 5:2-5 (NIV)

There were Jews who sought to profit monetarily from the Jews situation.

Rebuilding the wall was the number one concern for them and their city. Yet there were some who saw the task as an opportunity to get rich (*and to gain power or control*), and they began to take advantage of their brother's and sister's situation. Those who worked had to eat, and some of their brethren traded with them food for loans, mortgages, lands, homes, and even their children to become their brethren's personal slaves.

When Nehemiah heard this, he became very angry! But notice he did not immediately lash out in his anger. He pondered who would do such a thing, and then he accused the nobles and the officials and confronted them saying...

... "As far as possible, we have bought back our Jewish brothers who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

Nehemiah 5:8 (NIV)

They were speechless! Conviction can leave one speechless! Nehemiah went on...

⁹ *... "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?"* ¹⁰ *I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let the exacting of usury stop!* ¹¹ *Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the usury you are charging them--the hundredth part of the money, grain, new wine and oil."* ¹² *"We will give it back," they said. "And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say." Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised.* **Nehemiah 5:9-12 (NIV)**

Nehemiah deals with the situation quickly and fearlessly. This is one of the more subtle forms of intimidation. Remember, it is a witchcraft spirit, and it desires to control. Why do I say that it is a witchcraft spirit?

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. 1 Samuel 15:23a (KJV)

Some of the people feared not being able to feed their family. And because they were afraid, they fell prey to the intimidations of the nobles and officials. By having people indebted unto them, the nobles and officials could exercise control over them. And what would happen when their desires differed from Nehemiah's? They would end up trying to wrestle control over the people away from Nehemiah by forcing the people who feared them to do their bidding!

To defeat intimidation, we must walk in the authority given to us by God, and never be afraid of those who try to intimidate. For every decision in life you will have to make, the Bible holds the answer. You must search it out.

QUESTIONS:

1. How do you react when people try to question you about what you are doing?
2. Does your reaction differ when you don't know what you are doing?
3. Intimidation works best with fear. Have you ever been afraid to speak God's Word in a setting where you're the only Christian?
4. What is the best way to overcome intimidation?

LESSON 5

Revival

It's a shame but today the devil has even attacked the very thought of a church having a revival. I have heard this attack yelled (*yes yelled!*) at myself and other preachers! This is what the devil's servants say...

"Revivals don't work! Ain't nobody getting saved in no revivals! You never see anyone getting saved in a revival! So why have them?!"

First of all, revival was never intended for the unsaved. Then who is revival for?

1. Revival is for them that are already saved.
2. Revival is for the ones who are at the church for almost everything, giving their time, talent, and strength for the Lord and His church, and they are spiritually exhausted and physically tired!
3. Revival is for youth who have lost interest in church and serving God due to the pressures of their friends, this world, and yes; the people at the church!

Second of all, most don't invite nor bring anyone who needs to be saved to revival. So, if nobody is getting saved, why fuss at the preacher? There is a great revival coming soon, and many will wish they had been there! But we need to truly understand what revival is. To gain insight, let us look to Nehemiah and the great revival he and the people of Jerusalem had.

Something remarkable happens that many of us have probably never seen in our lifetime. The people came together as one and spoke to Ezra the scribe and

called for him to bring out the book of the Law of Moses which God had commanded to Israel. Yes, you heard it right, the **PEOPLE** were as **ONE** and desired to know the book of the Law of Moses. And Ezra read to them from the book **from morning until midday** and no one complained about how long “the service” was! All the people were attentive to the book of the Law. And many need to see this for themselves lest they think I am making it up...

⁴ And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose;... ⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: ⁶ And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Nehemiah 8:4-6 (KJV)

And when the people heard the words of the Law, they all wept. Why would hearing the Word cause them to weep? Because God’s conviction for sin can be overwhelming, but always remember He chastises whom He loves. This is what revival is really about! People hearing the Word and self-checking themselves against the Word of God to see how they are walking, weeping in repentance when they are convicted, and realizing they are unprofitable servants when they have only done that which was their duty to do.

*So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. **Luke 17:10 (KJV)***

We will never impress God with our works, but with our faith we can please Him. That does not mean we should not work, but we are not saved by our works. The people reassembled the very next day to hear more and to learn more, that they might do more to obey the Lord. As the people learned what God wanted them to do, they responded by doing what the Law said. In return their hearts were made merrier day by day. This is what revival ought to do! So, the question now becomes, “Why are we not made merrier by revival?” I believe the answer may shock some!

Today we don’t come to learn the Word of God and judge ourselves so that **WE** will not be judged. Today we come and we judge the Word and the method of delivery. Was it entertaining? Did the preacher preach it in a way that caught my attention? Did anyone get up and start shouting? Was “I” able to feel the Spirit in the church?

How can we be made merrier when we sit in judgement of the preacher and/or the preached Word of God? The answer is we cannot. In order for us to get what we need; we have to do what the scriptures teach us to do.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein. Luke 18:17 (KJV)

Jesus was not saying only the children are saved, he was saying we must become as children to receive the kingdom of God. A little child will believe whatever you tell him/her implicitly. But an adult will have doubts, skepticism, or will want it proven before they will believe. Our faith must become as accepting as the faith of a little child. If the Bible says it, then without question it is to be taken to heart by faith as true and we receive it and we believe it.

But once we are exposed to school life, friends, and especially other religions, even though we will confess our beliefs we wonder why it sometimes feels so hollow to us. After all, when Jesus showed up, devils screamed, howled, and made confessions as to who He really is! But when we show up, the same doesn't seem to happen for us. Why is that? Let me see if I can help you to understand.

1. Do you pray as often as Jesus prayed?
2. Do you always do those things that please the Father like Jesus did?
3. Do you know the right scripture for the right situation?
4. Are you trying to wield the power of God on a brother or sister in Christ?

Where in scripture do we see Jesus act like us? The answer is He doesn't. We must become like Him! Jesus countered every attack against Himself with the Love of the Father. Hate cannot defeat His love. Hate should not defeat our love either when our love is the same as His love. Revival can remind us of these things, there by reviving the correct spirit within each of us.

Revival reminds us to be forgiving toward each other, and even toward our enemies. It's interesting to note that Ezra only read the scriptures while the Levites explained them day by day. The Levites confessed the solemn goodness of God by reminding the people of their rich history which is filled with their own sins and most of all with the love and forgiveness of God.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your own opinion of having a revival?
2. How do you feel about coming to church on Sundays?