
Generally this time of year pastors get up and share their visions for the church and rally people to get behind their vision.

At Life Church we believe God gives everyone a part of the overall vision that makes up our unique place in and mission within our world. We believe God wants to let, “everybody play”, John Wimber

Our mission as leaders is to resource and equip you to fulfill your mission. We want you to get into the game. **“On any given Sunday in stadiums across the nation there are 22 men on a football field desperately in need of rest and 50,000 fans in the stands desperately in need of exercise.”** - Bill Bidwell

On no, another message on how I need to be at church and volunteer, and attend a Life Group. But you may say your life is full now. You don’t have time to serve or explore some ministry opportunity. I would definitely agree with you, yes, **your life is FULL, but is it FULFILLING?**

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During this series we are going to see that one person really can make a difference in the world and in a short amount of time if they

We are going to look for the next few weeks at an Old Test. character named Nehemiah.

The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa. (modern day IRAQ),² Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

³ They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.” Neh. 1:1-3

Kingdom united under David and Solomon. Solomon dies and sons allows kingdom to split into two. The Northern Kingdom called Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem was at center of Judah. The temple was in Jerusalem. Over the years the northern kingdom was overrun and the people scattered. Jerusalem was finally overrun and it’s people taken captive to Babylon (BAGDAD). This is the time when you read many of the Old Testament major and minor prophets writing.

Nehemiah takes place during a period around 445-425BC when Artaxerxes, the Persian king is allowing the Jews to return to their native homeland and their chief city of Jerusalem which now lies in rubble.

How embarrassing is it for a people who claim their God is ruler of the world and the one place He comes down to connect with the people and they connect with Him lies in ruins. The entire city is a disgrace. The people who have moved back to Jerusalem lack the resources and ability to rebuild the city.

Nehemiah gets the report from Jerusalem. The first thing he does is...

1. *When I heard these things, I sat down and wept.* Neh. 1:4

Something got to Nehemiah's heart. This need touched him deeply.

What touches you? It is different for everyone. What need or injustice or situation troubles you enough to want to do something?

Again some of you are exhausted. You come from a hard day, barely able to make it. There are things that have to get done and when we do get a break we just want to sit down and veg in front of the TV and escape into a world of other people's problems that all get solved in 30 minutes.

If we are going to live a fulfilled life we are going to have to make some space like I mentioned during our last series. Do some renovations, housecleaning, and let something touch our heart so we go from surviving to living an intentional life that is fulfilling.

Example: [redacted] works at Lowes, just got back from Nigeria fighting human trafficking.

[redacted] gave up a winter home in Florida to be here for international refugees.

Maybe it is something you see on the news. People who lose someone become crusaders for an issue that cost the life of their loved one. Sometimes causes us to want to fix something so others don't hurt.

Your misery may become your ministry.

Look how Nehemiah responded to this need...

2. *For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.* Neh. 1:4

He immediately took this burden back before God. **he didn't look to himself**, he didn't start making plans based on human effort. He went to God in [redacted]

This is the most important step that we tend to skip when we get excited about an opportunity. We rush to make our plans while ignoring God's. Then we fail and wonder why God didn't bless our plans.

He also fasted. Fasting is a spiritual discipline we need to talk about and do more often.

Fasting is simply withholding something usually food, in order to focus on God. The goal is not to impress God, but to press into Him. To deny our body for the sake of something more important. Fasting places our lives in a state of humility before God. Physical hunger is matched by renewed spiritual hunger.

We see many examples in the Bible both in the Old and New Testaments. Fasting is not a tool to manipulate God, like some form of a hunger strike. Fasting resets God at the center of our lives over ourselves.

When I get really hungry and feel those pains it reminds me how much I follow my body instead following the admonition of the apostle Paul who said, "I **discipline my body and make it my slave.**". We will either discipline and be in control of our bodies and minds for Gods purposes or they will rule over us.

Nehemiah knew the challenge and he knew the only way he was going to be prepared and have Gods heart and His wisdom was to set aside a time to fast and pray.

Notice the two always go together. Fasting without prayer may help you physically but it won't accomplish anything spiritually.

We have gotten out of the habit here at Life Church of starting the year with a fast and I want to reinstate it.

I am going to ask you to join me in a fast next week. I am starting today. My goal is pray for you and Life Church to fulfill Gods purpose in 2012.

I am doing a juice fast. Only fruits and vegetables. This is that is modeled by Daniel which he did for 21 days.

I know some of you have health issues and cannot fast. You can maybe fast in other ways, TV, computer time, some hobby, maybe 30 minutes of sleep to meet with God in prayer.

He didn't leave it up to someone else more qualified or better resourced. HE PRAYED...

3. Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king. Neh. 1:11

Nehemiah was ready to volunteer to be used by God to meet this need. He knew he didn't have the resources or maybe the ability but He knew God could give success and favor with the right people.

He had what I call at _____, "I've had all I can stands, and I can't stands me no more."

Let's start 2012 by opening our lives to God and not letting an excuses get in the way of His dreams for our lives.

He probably had read the words of Isaiah...

Your people will rebuild the old cities that are now in ruins; you will rebuild their foundations. You will be known for repairing the broken places... Isa. 58:12 NCV

This word applies to us today. That's what I want to be known for, and I believe that is what God wants Life Church to be. A life giving church that repairs broken people and communities.

What a unique coincidence that he would have access to the king. The same place Esther found herself. The place Moses was in. The place where you are right now!

What is it that burdens you?

If there is something that weighs heavy on you begin to pray and fast. Do some research maybe someone else is doing it already and you can come alongside and join them. Or maybe it is something no one is doing and God wants to give you favor and resources to meet that need.

I am not big on written prayers. I think God would rather hear from us directly and from the heart though maybe not as eloquent as someone else, but I read this prayer this week and thought it appropriate to today's message...

—Sir Francis Drake, explorer and naval pioneer during the Elizabethan era

My prayer is that God would disturb you. Disturb you out of spiritual apathy and slumber and that you would awaken to the Adventure of following Christ and dare to allow His dreams to lead you to fulfillment this year.