



AWCI SERMON *Notes & Announcements*

DATE: Sept. 7th, 2025

SPEAKER: Bishop (Dr.) Vincent Collins

SERMON TITLE: Pray First: Finding Balance in a Broken World

Visit www.agapeworship.org/resources to access a digital copy or scan the QR Code.

KEY PASSAGE

Nehemiah 1:1–11 (NIV): 1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, 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.” 4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. 5 Then I said: “Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. 8 “Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, 9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’ 10 “They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. 11 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.

BACKGROUND

The book of Nehemiah is both historical and inspirational. Set in the 5th century B.C., the Israelites had returned from exile in Babylon but were still vulnerable, discouraged, and struggling to reestablish their identity as God’s people. Jerusalem’s walls—their protection and pride—were in ruins, leaving the people exposed and broken.

Life can hit us with chaos from every direction—family pressures, financial burdens, health struggles, and a culture that often mocks our faith. It feels like trying to build something in the middle of a storm. That’s exactly where Nehemiah was: his city in ruins, his people discouraged, and enemies surrounding them. But instead of panicking, Nehemiah did something powerful—he prayed first.

SERMON POINTS

I. See the Brokenness

Nehemiah teaches us that thriving in chaos starts with seeing the brokenness.

Nehemiah 1:3 (NIV): “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

Psalm 34:18 (NIV): “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Lamentations 3:22–23 (NIV): “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

How do we see brokenness?

- Ask Questions: Brokenness comes to light when we care enough to ask.
- Listen Deeply: Nehemiah didn’t just hear; he listened until his heart was moved.
- Allow Yourself to Feel: Nehemiah wept. He didn’t numb himself or hide behind a tough exterior.

Pause for the Cause:

What broken areas of your world have you been ignoring? Is it a broken relationship in your family? A broken system in your community? A broken place in your own heart?

II. Bring It to God

Before Nehemiah lifted a brick, he lifted his voice. Before he moved his hands, he bent his knees.

Nehemiah 1:4–6 (NIV): “When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said: ‘Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you.’”

James 5:16 (NIV): “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

Philippians 4:6–7 (NIV): “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Matthew 7:7 (NIV): “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

III. Stand on God’s Promises

Nehemiah reminded God of His own Word—not because God forgets, but because it strengthens our faith when we stand on His promises.

Nehemiah 1:8–9 (NIV): “Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.””

Isaiah 55:11 (NIV): “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV): “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”

BEYOND THE MESSAGE

Brokenness Is an Invitation to Pray

- Nehemiah didn’t deny Jerusalem’s pain—he allowed it to move him into prayer. Our pain can either push us away from God or pull us closer to Him. When we bring our brokenness to God, He turns it into a starting point for healing and rebuilding.
- Discussion Prompt: Think about a time when brokenness in your life drew you closer to God. What did you learn about prayer in that season?

Prayer Requires Persistence

- Nehemiah prayed, fasted, and mourned for days before taking any action. Prayer wasn’t a one-time emotional outburst—it was a sustained commitment. Real breakthrough often requires more than quick prayers; it calls for persistence, patience, and endurance in God’s presence.
- Discussion Prompt: What areas of your life feel like they’ve been in “waiting mode”? How could persistence in prayer help strengthen your faith in that area?

Prayer Changes You Before It Changes Things

- The walls of Jerusalem weren’t instantly rebuilt when Nehemiah prayed, but Nehemiah himself was transformed—his faith grew, his courage increased, and his heart aligned with God’s purposes. Prayer shapes us to be the kind of people God can use.
- Discussion Prompt: How has prayer shaped your perspective or changed your attitude even before your situation changed?

Prayer Connects You to God’s Power

- Prayer is not about how strong your words are—it’s about connecting to the One who has all power. Nehemiah tapped into heaven’s strength by humbling himself before God. When we pray, we’re not just asking for help—we’re partnering with God’s power to accomplish His will.
- Discussion Prompt: Where do you most need God’s power to show up in your life right now? What would it look like to depend less on your strength and more on His?

Prayer Positions You for Provision

- Nehemiah’s prayer included confession, remembrance of God’s promises, and a request for favor. That prayer opened the door for God to provide everything Nehemiah needed—resources, authority, and protection. Prayer is not about demanding, but about aligning with God’s provision that is already waiting.
- Discussion Prompt: What promise of God do you need to start praying over your life, family, or situation? How might confessing and declaring that promise in prayer change the way you see your needs?

NOTES

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please note: There are multiple ways to sign up for an event. You can scan the QR code, visit our website, or sign the signup sheet in the foyer under the event registration section.

Sept. 3rd - Oct. 8th at 7:00 pm: Wednesday Night Bible Study: Blueprint of Faith: The Nehemiah Bible Study!

Sept. 7th - at 1pm-3pm- Next Step Class: All new church members and guests looking to learn more about AWCI are invited to attend.

Sept. 20th at Weston Lake at 10am & Sept. 28th at AWCI after 11AM service - Our next water baptism celebration—scan the QR code and sign up to take this powerful step of faith!

Sept. 21st- Church Anniversary and Pastoral Appreciation Celebration

Sept. 20th at 10:00 am-4:00 pm —Annual Church Picnic. For more information, contact Minister Wanda Brown or your Life Group Leader. Sign Up Today by scanning the QR code.

Oct. 15th-Nov. 19th at Various Dates & Times: Fall Into Fun: Agape’s Interest Groups. Scan the QR Code to sign up today. For more information, contact the Christian Education Department.

Nov. 1st at 10am-3pm -AWCI Community & Health Fair. For more information, contact: Deacon Eureka Washington.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH & FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES

Sunday School

- Every Sunday at 10:10 am-10:55 am.
- Scan QR Code to Sign Up & receive a digital copy of the Sunday School Book.

Men’s Ministry Meeting.

- Every 3rd Saturday, 8:30 AM.
- At Agape Worship Center International
- All men are invited.
- More information: Contact Deacons Teddy Spence or Eureka Washington.

Breakfast For Champions: Weekday Devotion & Prayer

- Monday-Friday at 7 am
- Call In: 717-908-1690 Access Code: 577625

Intercessory Prayer

- Every 1st, 2nd, and 4th Monday at 6:30pm-7:30pm

Virtual Midday Bible Study - Starting Back August 14th, 2025

- Every Thursday at noon
- Call In: (470)869-2200 (US East)
- Meeting ID: 393-678-9202
- Virtual:meetings.ringcentral.com/j/3936789202

CONNECT, GROW, BELONG!

Whether you’re a first-time guest or a long-time member, we invite everyone to fill out our Connect Card—just scan the QR code to update your information, share prayer requests, and take your next step, whether that’s joining a membership class, signing up for baptism, finding a life group, volunteering, or simply learning more about our church.