

. Walk Thru the Bible

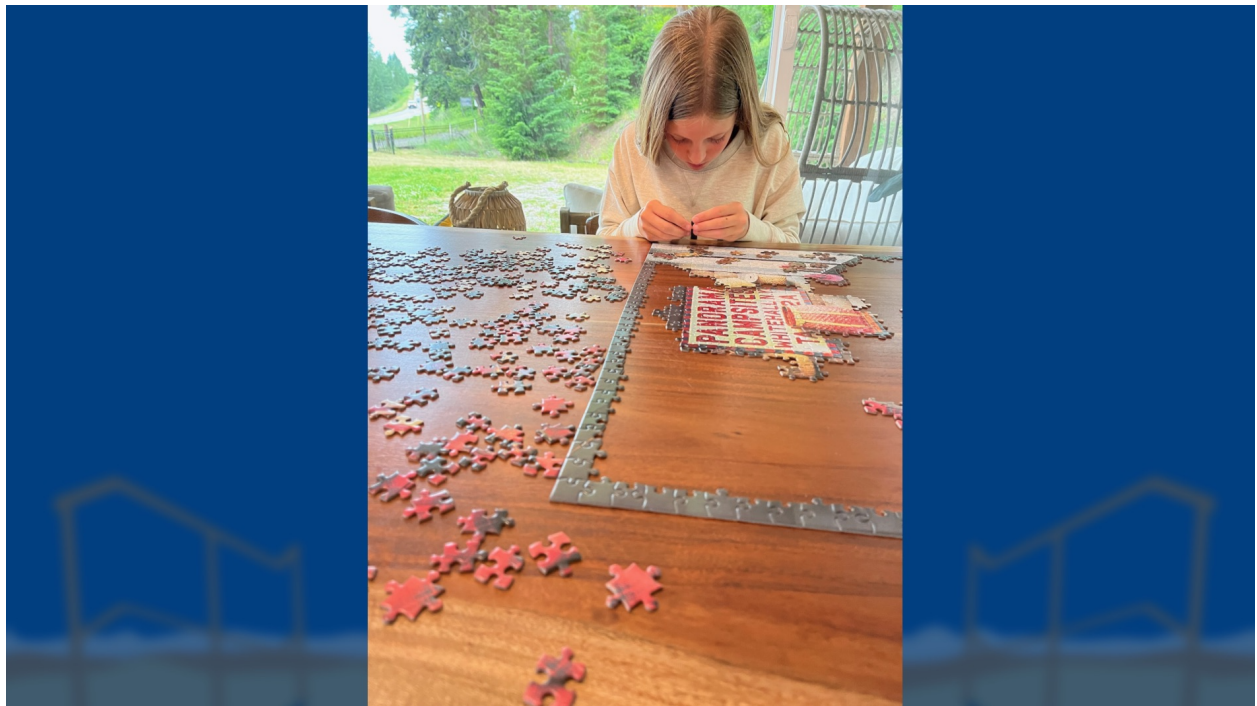
#9: Discipline and Restoration

2 Kings 17, 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36; Ezra; Isaiah 10; Jeremiah 24-25; Haggai; Hebrews 12:5-11

Robert Morris ---- July 26, 2026

Well, good morning, Grace. Friends, we are on the home stretch. We have two weeks left in our walk through the Old Testament this summer. I hope you've been enjoying that.

As we get started here, while I was on vacation one of the things my family loves to do (well, my wife and my daughter love to do it, and my son and I play along) is puzzles while we're at some place for a few days. We'll do that over the course of the day.



And for my wife, it's one of those things that she can spend just enough brain power so that the rest of life kind of melts away, right? There's nothing much to think about except what's in front of you.

But what happens is that when we do a puzzle together, we have these times when the puzzle gets a little more difficult. We have these times when we're focusing on one piece or one section and we're really having a hard time making it all fit together. But what happens (and we've learned this over the years) is that if we will step back, remove ourselves from the table

and maybe go do something for a few minutes or go for a drive, or whatever it is, when we come back to the table it's uncanny how quickly the pieces start flowing. We see things differently. We've gotten some perspective.

And it has me thinking about my own spiritual life—how often I look at the one pieces that are going on in my heart and my life, these life events that are happening. And I'm trying to figure out how these things fit in the whole. How do these puzzle pieces work together? And sometimes I have to step back and get some perspective, because life with Christ is this larger, fuller picture, and I want to see that big picture sometimes.

Now I don't mean to minimize the impact of one-piece events. Sometimes we're going through something in that moment that is taking all our focus, all our energy. Maybe there's even some pain involved. But sometimes we've got to step back and get perspective. What's the bigger picture here?

And we can also do this with the Bible, which is why I love what we've been doing this summer. If you've joined us, we've tried to give you a 30,000-foot view of the entire story and arc of the Old Testament in a way that can make sense. We've attached some hand motions to that, some physicality, so that, hopefully, we can remember that. Because we don't want to be only experts in a few little pieces of our Bibles. We don't want to understand only a few of the stories and know those deeply. We want to understand how they fit in the bigger picture—how all the pieces fit together.

And so, over these last two weeks we have eight hand signs left. And I think these eight hand signs go all together. Because you're going to see a couple of trend lines come through. You're going to see that God is sovereign; that He is accomplishing what He wants to accomplish. Don't forget that. He is accomplishing what He wants to accomplish. And He is using events and people and all kinds of things to put the puzzle pieces together.

And so (I know, you're going to think, *Are we really going to cover that much?*), we are going to cover 600 or 700 years of history over the next two weeks. And you're going to see that the Lord is going to bring groups to power. He's going to tear others down. He's going to raise certain groups up and bring others down. But He's the one active. He's the one with these big, overarching goals—two things: to shape His people, and to write His perfect redemption story. He wants to shape His people, and He wants to write His perfect redemption story.

Now, one thing quickly before we get started. If you're not very familiar with the Bible, or maybe you're not a student of the Bible and haven't studied the Old Testament, this part of the Bible can be a little bit confusing for one reason. It's because in the Bible timeline there's not just one place in the Bible where you can go and get all the information you need about this section of time. So, when we are studying Creation, Fall, Flood, Nations, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, that's just the Book of Genesis, right? And you know exactly where to go. You can read that narrative all the way through. But what happens at the end of the Old Testament is that there are all these little bits and pieces, all these different little books of the Bible, that are speaking to this timeframe. And so, it can get a little confusing trying to understand how these things fit together. For instance, you've got history books like 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah and Esther. And they're narratives, and they're telling us what is happening. And every now and again there's this wonderful, beautiful spiritual truth, or something we learn about the nature of humanity.

And you also have this other group of books called the Prophets. And we talked a little about those last week. Kevin shared this diagram.



That's a great diagram to help you know who's talking to who, and when they are talking to each other. But the prophets' angle is more what is going on in the hearts and lives of the people and

what's going to happen in the future according to God, because He's going to be acting. And so, I'm going to do my best today to show you how all these things fit together.

Last week, if you remember, we left off at Prophets Speak—everybody—Prophets Speak [*with right hand flap thumb and fingers together to mimic someone speaking*]. (You're going to have to get active with me today. We've got four of these to do.)

But warning after warning, prophet after prophet, it's the same general message: Wake up; stop; do not go down this path. All of the dashboard lights are red and blinking. Please change direction. And many of us have been here. I don't know if you've had this experience in life, when you've been the warner of somebody—you've had to go to a friend or family member or a child and say, *Please, please do not continue down this path. It will not end well.*

And some of us have had the experience of being the warn-ee. We've had someone come to us in love and say, *Would you please reconsider what you're doing? It's not going to go well.* And many of us have the scars from that when we ignored it. Or we have the joy of not knowing how bad it could have gotten if someone had not loved us so well.

And so, in spite of these warnings, the people of Israel are headed down this path. Their hearts are hard, spiritual disease has taken over. They're led by the mostly what? Bad kings. It's trickling down, and this is tragic. Because the people of Israel were supposed to be something special. They were supposed to be a blessing to the world. They were supposed to show off some things about YHWH God that other nations around them were supposed to view and see and learn from. And slowly, they've just become like everybody else. And they've been warned so often.

God's going to begin this global project that will use other nations to bring about the result He wants. He's going to raise up multiple geopolitical powers in the next couple of weeks. And I don't want you to be fooled. I don't want you to misunderstand and think that this is just about little pieces or little battles or emperors and kings and maneuvering and global domination. That stuff is all in your Bible if you want to read it. But I want you to see the bigger picture of what is happening behind the scenes where the real director, the real, sovereign God of the universe, again, is trying to accomplish something in His people, and He's trying to work His perfect redemption story.

So, here's what happens. The kingdoms are divided, if you remember from last week. If you weren't with us, there are ten tribes in the north and two in the south. The northern tribes are

completely off the rails, out of control. They've been warned and have failed to heed every warning known to man.

And so, God raises up the Assyrian army to do His work. The Bible clearly says in Isaiah 10 that Assyria is this tool or rod in the hand of God. There's a divine intention to what is happening. And the Assyrians, my friends, are no Boy Scouts either. Don't be fooled. And later on in Isaiah 10, Isaiah is going to say that God will take care of Assyria in good time, but for now they're a tool in His hands for this season.

Assyria's capital is the city of Nineveh. If you remember the story of Jonah, that's the city he is told to go to, and he says, *I'm not going*. But he ends up going anyway. And God uses Assyria to take over the northern kingdom of Israel, the northern ten tribes. And Israel is scattered. So, that's our first phrase today: Israel is scattered. A couple of key passages if you're interested in digging into this more and want to find out more about how all this fits together: Isaiah 10 (excuse my writing—I'm going to try and go fast), 2 Kings 17.

Before you think, *Oh, it wasn't that bad*, 2 Kings 17 is a stark and comprehensive rundown of how far the wickedness had gotten—all the continual disobedience, all the stubbornness, the participation in human sacrifice, the despising of God's statutes and commands, the abandonment of God and how it was a multigenerational problem.

And so, God uses the Assyrian army to scatter the ten tribes of Israel and to take them over and conquer them. And they're going to bring in new people to repopulate the land, and the people begin to intermarry with one another, and they begin to do what they do. And these people live in Samaria, and so, they're called Samaritans. And if you know your Bible, there's a really important story about a Samaritan that Jesus tells.

So, Israel is scattered. Ready, here we go—here's our motion for that. We're going to make a circle for Israel [*let each hand form one half of a circle, meeting at the bottom and then at the top of the circle*], and then we're going to scatter them [*push both hands up and away above one shoulder*]. Israel—Scattered. Very good.

Now Israel is scattered, but the remaining two tribes are spared for a little bit longer. And yet, 2 Chronicles 26 talks about how they too are mocking the messengers of God. They are despising His word. They are scoffing at the prophets. And God eventually says, *Okay, it's your turn now*. And so, He sends His judgment, His discipline, to the southern kingdom after they've been spared for a little bit longer.

And He raises up another world power named Babylon. And Babylon is this new bully on the scene. And they conquer Assyria, and then they look to expand from there. And guess who's a neighbor to Assyria? These two southern tribes of Judah.

Here's an interesting side note. I had a professor in college who said there are only two kinds of conquerors. There are the ones who conquer you and you love it. They beat you up, but at least they make life better and welcome you in afterwards. And then there are these other conquerors who beat you up and make life miserable. They're looking for annihilation and domination. And Babylon, friends, is the more of the latter. They are a ruthless and brutal people. They come through and destroy it. They burn it to the ground. They leave the city in pieces. In 2 Chronicles 36:17 it says they had "no compassion" whatsoever. Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar (if you've heard his name) take the southern kingdom of Judah captive, and Jerusalem, the city of God, falls in 586 BC. And those they don't kill and destroy are picked up and exiled to Babylon.

So, we have Judah being exiled. Judah—Exiled. Here are a few key passages if you want: 2 Chronicles 36, 2 Kings 24 and 25, and also the prophet Jeremiah, who speaks about this time in chapters 24 and 25. So, if you want to do some digging, write that down and read about that later.

Lest we forget and we think this is some other kind of geopolitical maneuvering, if we step back from the table and gather some perspective, we'll read in 2 Kings 24:3 "Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the Lord." He's doing things; He's putting the pieces of the puzzle together.

So, we have Judah—Exiled. Here's our motion for Judah—Exiled. We're going to scoop them up [*with hands together in front of you, make a scooping motion*] and we're going to exile them [*keeping hands together, move them diagonally up above one shoulder*]. Judah—Exiled.

Let's do the two we've got so far. We've got Israel—Scattered, and we have Judah—Exiled. Very good. You guys are really good at this!

I love how even in the pain of this—and it's painful, friends—there are silver linings, there is hope, there is grace involved. You going to see that in this season in your Bible there is a unique kind of protection of those who still love and trust and serve God during this time. You're going to see stories in this exile timeframe in the Book of Daniel, and later on next week we'll talk about Esther. We're going to see how God is still taking care of the faithful. We're also

going to see that even in the discipline, the prophet Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 25 that it's going to be seventy years. I don't know about you, but that seems like a long time. It's longer than I've been alive, and for most of us in this room, it's maybe longer that we've been alive. But he says that there's going to be a limit. The consequences, the grounding, is only going to last so long. *I promise you that it's only going to be seventy years.*

Before we move on from these scatterings and exiles, these two sections, I think it's important for us to pause right here and maybe ask what we might be thinking in the back of our heads, this uncomfortable question about this part of the timeline. What do you do with this God who says He loves his people but eventually gets to the point where He says, "That's enough. No more"? He puts them in this kind of timeout to bring about the result He wants. We can think, *God, is this really the best way to accomplish that? Why do You have to do it that way?*

And in our modern sensibilities we kind of want to craft God—just like the people of Israel, because there are stories there too—in our image, and not always in the image He presents to us through the Bible. *God, these are Your covenant people. How does love and justice and the heart of the Heavenly Father towards this wayward and lost group of people all work? Is this the most loving way to get their attention?* But as we wrestle with this, I want to make sure you don't forget, friends, that these people were warned for hundreds of years. There were multiple generations and centuries of disobedience to God and forgetfulness of Him on a large and grand scale.

And if you read your Old Testament (although it's very popular in our day and age to think that God is some easily angered, vindictive god) very closely, He is not a hot-tempered father who quickly blows up at His children in a fit of anger like I am sometimes. He is not some mother who is quickly counting to three to get some kid to comply. No, you'll see that the story of God, if you really dig into it, is just how longsuffering, how patient, how kind He is; and how often He doesn't give people what they deserve.

Hebrews 12:5-8

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addressed you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives. ⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

And one of the passages in the Bible (if you’re wrestling with this concept or you want to try to understand this more) where we’ll camp out a little more today is in the Book of Hebrews, chapter 12. It helps us see God’s heart in this area. I’d love to go through it with you, if we could. Hebrews 12, starting in verse 5, says this: “And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord’”—here we go—” ‘disciplines the one He loves.’” So, what we have right here is what I’ll call the motive. Do you want to know the motive of discipline? Do you want to know the heart of discipline? It’s there. It’s love. And he continues. It says, “‘...and chastises every son whom He receives.’ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” He’s using this earthly metaphor to help us understand this. “If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are”—here we go—“illegitimate children.” There is something about discipline that means you’re part of the family. If you’re not receiving discipline, it’s because you’re not part of the family.

Hebrews 12:9-11

⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Let's continue. Here we go. He says, "Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they ..."—so, earthly fathers right here. If I could pause quickly, I know that many of you have very imperfect fathers. Some of you may have even had evil, brutal, deeply flawed fathers. And it's going to be hard for you to read this passage, I know, without looking through that lens. But we're going to see a contrast here in just a moment of an earthly father versus a heavenly father. "They ..."—these earthly fathers—"disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them." And friends, if you grew up with an evil or deeply, deeply flawed father, that "best to them" could have been a lot of pain for you. And I want to acknowledge that and tell you that. But here we have this "but" when we switch to God, this loving heavenly Father. "But He disciplines us for our good." So, we already have the motive of love. Here's our purpose. What's the purpose of it? "...for our good." And I love this passage, because he's going to go on and explain two goods that he's trying to accomplish in this passage. Here's the first one: "... that we may share in His holiness." That's number one. And he says, "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields"—here we go—"the peaceful fruit of righteousness"—number two. There are two things the Lord is trying to accomplish with discipline. It's out of love—that's His motive in His heart. He wants this to be for our good, and He's trying to accomplish holiness and "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" in our lives. He's trying to produce something.

Kids, come with me ... anybody ... kids, teenagers, anybody who lives under the authority structure of your home still, raise your hand. Are you with me here? How many of you

have some kind of rules or some kind of discipline or consequence that happens when you break the family's rules? Raise your hands. Is that everybody? I hope it's everybody. Do you guys just run around doing your own thing? Okay, now don't tell me if those rules are unfair or not. I know, they're always unfair ... always. But in every family, there are boundaries, expectations, and rules. But guess what? It's because you're part of the family. Now, it may be an imperfect family with imperfect parents. As a dad myself, I know we aren't always the perfect example of this. But you're part of a family. And there are so many people in our world who would love to be part of a family. And God says, *Look, if you're getting discipline from me ...just like my people ... it's because you're my child ... you're a legitimate part of my family.* And if you aren't, that's an even scarier thought. Because that means you're out on your own with no one looking out for you.

Now one day, kids—listen to me—you might be in charge of your own family. And one of the things I know is that whatever decisions you make—and your rules will be way better than your parents' rules, okay? I know this, because mine were, and the whole deal, right? But I almost promise that you will do that out of a sense of real and genuine love for the people in your family. Now it may be imperfect love from imperfect people, but as I've talked to a lot of your parents over the years, I have never had a parent say to me, "You know my whole goal for my life is to ruin my child's life." I'm telling you, it's never happened.

Instead, what I get more and more often is men and women who are heartbroken and in tears, earnestly trying to help a young man or woman become all that God has for them to be. Because you're part of their family.

And the Lord is saying, *Look, these people of Israel are part of my family.* And the Lord disciplines those He loves. And often He's patient and kind and even merciful as He does it. But this perfect heavenly Father—not our earthly fathers, as good as they may have been—wants to make you holy, and He wants you to have the peaceful fruit of righteousness in your life. He wants to make you like His perfect Son, Jesus Christ. And so, just like that first verse says, "Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord."

Now really quick, friends, I don't have time this morning to talk about this, but I do want to point out that I do think there is a difference between the discipline of the Lord in my life and the realities of just living in a broken, flawed, and messed-up world. And I think that matters, because how a believer responds to those two things are very different. They're very different.

And if you have questions about that or you'd like to talk to somebody about that, I'd be happy to do that over the course of the next couple of weeks. Because those are two very different things.

And so, we see God disciplining those He loves. And next He's going to move the pieces of the puzzle around again, and this time He's going to raise up the Persian kingdom after the seventy years that He promised. Exactly at the end of the seventy years He promised, Persia comes to power and takes over the Babylonians. And they have what we'll call a more permissive attitude toward the people of Israel. And so, they allow the people of Judah to begin to return to their homeland.

But remember, if you're thinking this is just a geopolitical thing, we see in 2 Chronicles 36 in the last couple of sentences of the chapter: "The Lord stirred up the heart of Cyrus, King of Persia." In the very next page in Ezra 1 it's going to say the same thing. "The Lord stirred up the heart of the King of Persia." It was for a couple of purposes. So that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled in Jeremiah's prophecy, and to show that His people have kept His word.

And now the door is open to return. But the big question is: What are they going to find when they return? Because last time they were there, the city was in pieces and destroyed. There is much that's going to need to be rebuilt.

And so, Judah—at least those who desire to—are able to return. So, we've got Judah—Returned. Remember they're out here on the left? We're going to scoop them back up, and we're going to bring them back to the middle. Judah [*from above left shoulder, make scooping motion with both hands together*]—Returned [*keeping hands together, move them diagonally and down in front of you*].

All right, here we go. Here are a couple of key passages if you want to read about this later: 2 Chronicles 36 (Oh, I made that an eight. Sorry. It's my first time on the board, guys. You've got to be patient with me.) And then Ezra 1.

Let's keep the momentum going today. We've got three hand signs so far. We've got Israel—Scattered, Judah—Exiled, Judah—Returned. Very good.

With these three hand signs we've see God raise up multiple nations, multiple world powers, to discipline His people. But we know He's the main actor. He's the one doing things. He's the one commanding and stirring.

And next we're going to see Him using three great leaders to bring His people back and restore things. It's a beaten and broken-down place. It needs to be remade. I don't know if you remember that great show *Extreme Makeover Home Edition*. You guys remember this one?



“Move that bus” was one of my favorites. Now HGTV has about forty different versions of this. But we're going to cross this out, because it's going to be *Extreme Makeover Israel Edition* [*crosses out “Home” on the logo and writes in “Israel”*]. And that's going to be the theme for the next two weeks here. He's got a lot to rebuild. He's got a lot to remodel in Israel.

And so, Judah is going to return in three separate waves. And each time they come back there's a different kind of rebuilding that happens, a different kind of restoration. And the first rebuilding that happens is from a leader named Zerubbabel. I know—that is a mouthful. Zerubbabel is going to lead the people to rebuild the temple and to restore the proper worship of YHWH in Jerusalem.

And Zerubbabel is allowed to rebuild the temple there in Jerusalem. And so, the Book of Ezra talks about this process. There are delays, there are some hijinks, there's some sabotage. But eventually, worship is restored on the mountain that God said He should be worshiped on.

So, our next sign—here we go: Zerubbabel—Temple [*at the height of your head, make fists with both hands and let upper knuckles touch and then form a steeple with the two index*

fingers pointing up and touching at the fingertips]. And what we have there are two passages where you can dig more and read more about that. We've got Ezra 3 through 6, another great name, and we've got Haggai. I don't know I'm saying that right, but we're going to go with it—Haggai 1 through 2.

Okay, so we've got Zerubbabel—Temple. Here's the motion for Zerubbabel—Temple. We're going to make a triangle over our heads. That's pretty simple. No complex motions there. Zerubbabel--Temple. All right, here we go, all four now together with me. Here we go: Israel—Scattered, Judah—Exiled, Judah—Returned, Zerubbabel, Temple. You guys are dominating it. A-plus today.

That's our four for today. We're going to get to the two other rebuilds next week. But I want to summarize the big picture for us today if I can. The prophets warned, and they were speaking clearly about what would happen if the people continued to disobey and treat God with contempt and continue to go down on that path. They continued to live this life of what I will call functional atheism—all the workings, all the trappings, all the residue of a life and a relationship with God, but dead inside—nothing really—and they just did their own thing. And God loves His people enough that they have to live through this season of disappointment. It's a time where God says, *Look, you cannot keep going down this path. You have to wake up*. But we're reminded in Hebrews 12, friends, that the purpose of the Lord's discipline, if we are receiving it, is to lovingly restore us and to confirm that we are His children, that we are part of His family, and to produce in us something that we cannot often produce in ourselves, which is holiness and the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

And so, after a season of God orchestrating world powers to carry out the desires in His plan, there begins to be a season of restoration. And that restoration begins with worship. It begins with worship. And worship, friends, is simply the proper placing of God on His throne, the proper acknowledgment of who He is and what He's done and how He's in control, and the proper placement of us as the worshippers acknowledging these things and saying yes to God. *You are God. I'm here to love and serve and trust You, not myself*.

Friends, if you're looking at your life right now, I don't know what stories walked into this room today. But if you're looking at your life now and you're seeing a lot of rubble, a lot of the remnants of a life lived on your own without God, or ignoring His commands; if you've lived a life or choosing your own path instead of God's path, thinking that you know better and you

know the better way; first I would want to tell you, *Welcome to the club*. You're going to find a lot of stories around Grace Covenant Church that are a lot like that. There are a lot of people who have realized how good and gracious God has been to them to restore them and bring them back. The second thing I want to tell you is that there's no better place to be today than here in this room, together where we can corporately acknowledge our need for the Lord.

Because restoration begins with worship. *This is who I am. This is who you are, God. And I'm acknowledging that.* And in just a few moments we're going to get to express that again through song. And we're going to use this room corporately to put God on His throne and say, *You're God. I'm not. Help me.* I'm looking forward to that in just a few moments.

But first, you know what we've got to do. Okay. We're up to thirty-six signs. Can you believe that? Really quick, before we do the thirty-six signs, here's the thing. I have missed a lot of weeks this summer. *[Some laughter from the congregation.]* No listen ... come on! All right. I was graciously given extended time off this summer after fourteen years of serving on our staff. So, I missed a lot of weeks. *[Applause from the congregation.]* Please, I'm about to confess stuff to you. All right? I came back last Sunday, and I was trying to get prepared for this message. And I had the realization that I will probably lead you astray in the middle of this somewhere. I tried my best to get caught up, but I haven't done this myself in six years, and I missed five weeks in the middle. So, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to invite my friend Melissa up here really quick. Come on up, Melissa.

Listen, if this is your least favorite part of the morning, I'm with you. Because I'm going to feel like I'm the one who's going to be trying to catch up. So, I'm just saying that to empathize with you and say I understand. But we're all going to stand up and we're all going to do this—all thirty-six signs. Here we go—all thirty-six on the board. Here we go. All right, Melissa, I'm ready. Lead us.

All right—Creation, Fall, Flood, Nations, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Passover, Law, Tabernacle, Offerings, Feasts, Counting, Spying, Wandering, Dying, Second Law, Joshua, Divide, Conquer, Twelve Tribes, Judges, Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Everyone did what was right in his own eyes, except for Ruth and Samuel, United Kingdom, Saul—No Heart, David—Whole Heart, Solomon—Half Heart, Divided Kingdom, Mostly Bad Kings, Prophets Speak, Israel—Scattered, Judah—Exiled, Judah—Returned, Zerubbabel-Temple. Yeah!

All right, Melissa saved the day. Have a seat. Yeah, I was going to get lost somewhere around here. I don't know. And this whole *Everyone did what was right in his own eyes* is a very complex motion. There are three or four motions there.

All right, friends. Great job. We're one week away from knowing all forty of the hand signs, so don't miss the next four next week. Make sure you join us, and we'll put a bow on this thing. You'll understand the whole picture of the Old Testament. And next week we'll see the rebuild continue. We're going to see God use people to restore the things that are broken. But we're also going to come face to face with another hard and uncomfortable part of life with God. What do I do when I haven't heard from God in a while? What do I do when I can't hear God speak any more and it feels like there's radio silence on one end of the line?

So, I hope you'll join us next week. Let me pray for us and we'll put God on His throne through corporate worship here in just a moment. Let me pray.

God, thank You so much for this day. Thank You for the opportunity to consider Your word, consider Your truth. And God, I praise You as the longsuffering, patient and loving Father God who is orchestrating and sovereignly moving the world to accomplish all the things that You want to accomplish. And God, as hard as it is for me to understand all You're doing, even in my day and age, in my life, I rest comfortably knowing You have a plan and the power to pull off that plan. And You want good for me. You want holiness and the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

God, would You help us worship You together and to acknowledge that You are God, You're on Your throne? And thank You for my brothers and sisters gathered here today to collectively acknowledge You and trust in You. Would You accept this worship today, God, as a pleasing aroma to You, as a pleasing sound to Your ears. And restore us, rebuild us, God, into the men and women who You would have us to be—men and women who look like Your Son Jesus Christ in all our lives. We pray that in His name. Amen.