

(Intro Slide)



Many couples at least talk about having a “date night.” But, why?

-- Is date night an end in itself?

-- Or is it an intentional step toward creating the time and space needed to develop and nurture a relationship?

TR: In the 400s before Christ, Nehemiah was leading the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. But, why?

-- Was the wall an end in itself?

Nehemiah 6:15-16 Page 443 in Handout Bibles

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, **in fifty-two days.** ¹⁶And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that **this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.**

ESV

Let's turn in our Bibles and find out.

-- READ SLIDE

-- The people had worked hard, but this work had been accomplished with the help of God.

TR: Nehemiah didn't just stand back and admire his work and then head back to the Persian capital where he served the king.

Nehemiah 7:2-3a

I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was **a more faithful and God-fearing man** than many. ³And I said to them, "Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors.

ESV

In chapter 7:2 we read . . . that he appointed faithful, God-fearing leaders.

TR: and down in verse 5 . . .

Nehemiah 7:5a

Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy.

ESV

, , , READ SLIDE

-- This accounts for the lists of names found in chapter 7. Especially ensuring the legitimacy of the priests.

TR: SO . . .

*The wall is finished;
faithful, God-fearing leaders are appointed;
their legacy was confirmed (6:15-7:73)*

6

... READ SLIDE

TR: But when we get to chapters 8 and 9, we see a historical example of WHY the wall was built. What the ultimate hope was about.

*The wall is finished;
faithful, God-fearing leaders are appointed;
their legacy was confirmed (6:15-7:73)*



If I could give it a single word title, it would be “Revival.”

TR: But what is revival, or as our notes say it . . .



... READ SLIDE

TR: For many of us, finding “revival” is as intimidating as looking for ...



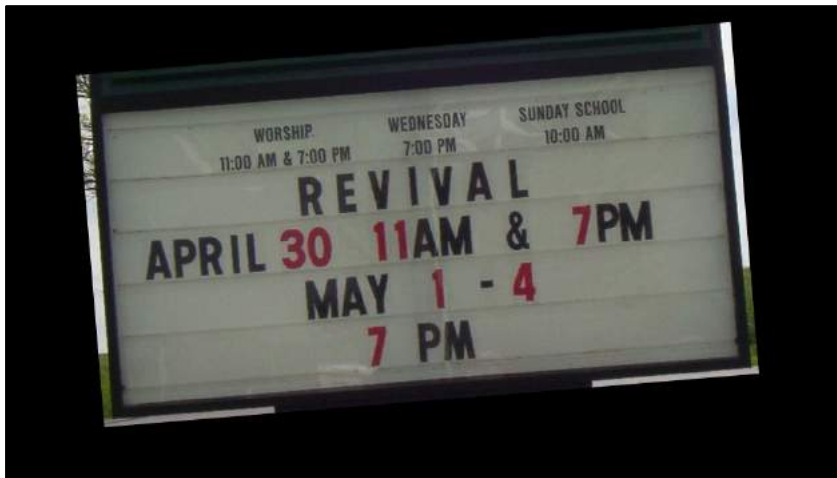
. . . agates on the shores of Lake Superior.

-- To me the pebble beaches look like a source of frustration to find these treasures.

-- But, to people like our own Don Nunn, they look like treasure troves of opportunity.

-- For those of us who don't know what we're looking for, it seems really unlikely that we'd ever find a gem of a rock like the one shown on the inset.

TR: The same is true for a lot of people looking for "revival." They imagine that this RE-VIVING, or bringing back to full life, can be . . .



. . . scheduled and planned.

TR: Or that it can be . . .



. . . cancelled due to illness or death.

TR: What should we be looking for? What does the historical account in Nehemiah describe to us?

Nehemiah 8:1-2

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. ²So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. ESV

Beginning at chapter 8 . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 3

Nehemiah 8:3

And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate **from early morning until midday**, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were **attentive** to the Book of the Law.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Ezra and a number of others were on a raised platform.

TR: Down to verse 5

Nehemiah 8:5-6

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and **as he opened it all the people stood.** ⁶And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "**Amen, Amen,**" lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- An active, even physical response to God's Word – verbal, with hands lifted, with heads and even bodies bowed.

TR: After listing more names, the middle of verse 7 continues

...

Nehemiah 8:7b-8

. . . the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. ⁸They **read** from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they **gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.**


ESV

READ SLIDE

-- So the Word was read **AND** then the “sense was given.” This is like what I try to do when I preach. You see it in the text and I try to help you understand and welcome the reading.

-- This scripture reading and sermon, lasted in the area of four hours plus.

TR: The people’s response tells us what characteristics we should be looking for when we are looking for a biblical revival. We should see . . .



What we are looking for (8:1-9:5)

- ❖ A profound hunger for the Word of God (8:1-8)

... READ SLIDE


TR: Think about it. People who are healthy, who are VIVED ... that is, vital, always have an ...



. . . appetite.

-- When one is sick, often there is no appetite. Nothing tastes good. Why bother to expend all that energy getting that fork to our mouth?

TR: Nehemiah, and also the book of Ezra, give us the historical example of REVIVAL and its first characteristic . . .



What we are looking for (8:1-9:5)

❖ A profound hunger for the Word of God (8:1-8)

- ... READ SLIDE (repeated from before).
- We don't read and study the Bible just to read and study the Bible.
 - We have a profound hunger to know God and to please Him, and therefore we devour His written revelation to us.
 - Or at least we should.
 - I've tried to provide tools like the Daily Reading Plan to help . . . but I can't give people the hunger.
 - But, when God revives a person, a church, a community-full of churches, there is always ravenous desire for the Word.

TR: There is also a second characteristic that we should be looking for. Let's pick it up in 8:9

Nehemiah 8:9

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: Verse 10**

Nehemiah 8:10-11

Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord.

And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." ¹¹So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved."

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 13

Nehemiah 8:12

And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and **to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.**

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: These verses contain a bonus lesson for us. Namely . . .



. . . "Brokenness is a path, not a destination."

-- The people were broken by the Word of God. It had laid them bare (as the book of Hebrews says).

-- And they wept.

-- When the Spirit of God is reviving people, there is often a great deal of weeping, of tears running down our faces.

-- But God does not want us to stay at the place of weeping forever. He wants us to get to great rejoicing.

TR: Verse 14 continues our search for a second characteristic that we should be looking for.

Nehemiah 8:14, 16a

And they found it written in the Law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month . . .

So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof . . .

ESV

READ SLIDE (Verse 14)

-- The Feast of Booths, a time to “go camping.” A time to dig deep into the truth of God’s revealed Word and into our relationships with Him and each other.

-- And the people did what after they read . . . **READ SLIDE (Verse 16a)**

TR: And then for the days of the feast they did what, see verse 18 . . .

Nehemiah 8:18

And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- This 8th day, this day of solemn assembly, was a day to further make sure that God's people were walking in step with what God had revealed to be His will.

TR: Chapter 9 picks it up.

Nehemiah 9:1-2

Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. ²And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: Verse 3**

Nehemiah 9:3


And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- In the days of a true, God-given revival, we read of people willing to seek God like this.

TR: Certainly we see underlined the characteristic of a profound hunger for the Word, but we also see modeled for us . . .

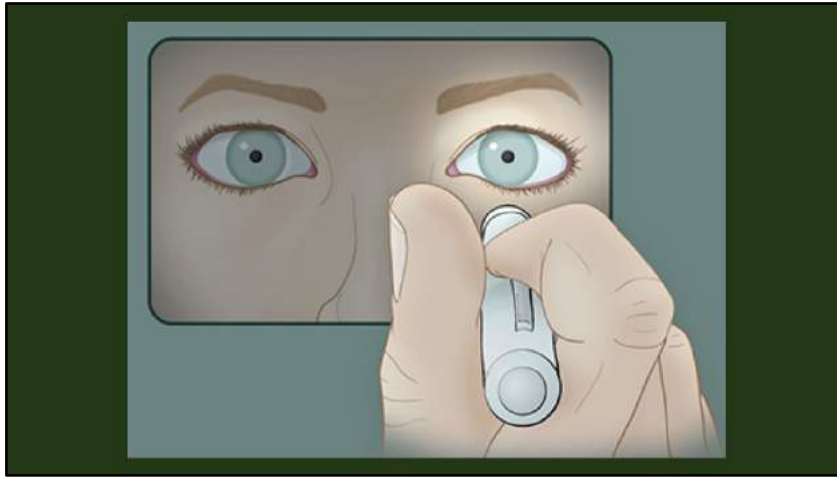


What we are looking for (8:1-9:5)

- ❖ A profound hunger for the Word of God (8:1-8)
- ❖ A quick obedience to the commands of God (8:9-9:5)

READ SLIDE


TR: There is a responsiveness. It is the opposite of what preachers see in times when there is little or no life in the people . . .



. . . that is, non-responsive pupils.

-- Just like when a doctor uses a small light to see if our pupils will respond to the light, so our response to the Word is a characteristic that models either the presence or absence of health.

TR: These are the two characteristics . . .



What we are looking for (8:1-9:5)

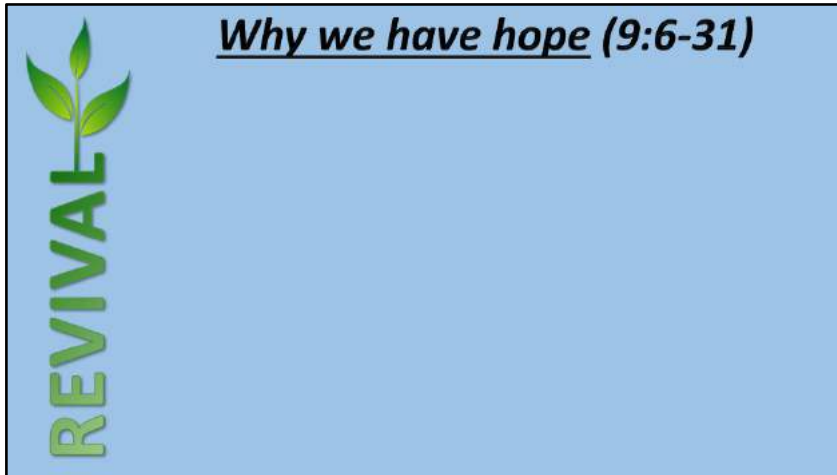
- ❖ A profound hunger for the Word of God (8:1-8)
- ❖ A quick obedience to the commands of God (8:9-9:5)

... READ SLIDE

-- EX: Judy's note of apology after 40 years could be a harbinger.

-- SO, now we have some idea of what to look for on the pebble beach of our days.

TR: But, why should we have hope that revival can come again to West Central Michigan and beyond?



**After all, I've been praying for it for 35 years and we have only seen sprouts of life, here and there, in the field of our work.
-- We have yet to see a true bumper crop of spiritual vitality when there are articles in the Grand Rapids Press talking about how God's Spirit is changing the very fabric of our counties.**

TR: My hope for revival, stimulated by the account in Nehemiah, is not rooted in my abilities or hard work.



It is not in my ability to lay on a good hell-fire and brimstone gilded guilt trip.

-- This church sign may be funny . . . but it speaks of people who are perhaps inadvertently communicating that they really don't have much hope that the AC thieves would ever be born again. They have condemned them to hell even before the final bell of death has rung.

-- NO, our hope is not in brow-beating our culture around us.

TR: As we find out where our hope truly lies, would you be like the people of Nehemiah's day and stand for this extended reading of God's Word?

Nehemiah 9:6-7a

"You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you. ⁷You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram . . .

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: (continue reading)

Nehemiah 9:7b-8

. . . and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. ⁸You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. **And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.**

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:9-10

"And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea, ¹⁰and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted arrogantly against our fathers. And you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: (continue reading)

Nehemiah 9:11-12

And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters. ¹²By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:13-14

You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments,¹⁴ and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:15

You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: (continue reading)

Nehemiah 9:16-17a

"But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. ¹⁷They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:17b-18a

But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. ¹⁸Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said . . .

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:18b-19

. . . 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, ¹⁹you **in your great mercies** did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:20-21

You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. ²¹Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:25

And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:26-27a

"Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies.
²⁷Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:27b

And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and **according to your great mercies** you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: (continue reading)

Nehemiah 9:28

But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them **according to your mercies.**

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: (continue reading)**

Nehemiah 9:29

And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.

ESV

READ SLIDE


TR: (continue reading)

Nehemiah 9:30-31

Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.
³¹Nevertheless, **in your great mercies** you did not make an end of them or forsake them, **for you are a gracious and merciful God.**

ESV

READ SLIDE**-- (Ask the congregation to be seated)****TR: Why can we have hope? Why should we never give up hope for revival, both covering many miles and individuals within those miles?**



Why we have hope (9:6-31)

❖ God disciplines those whom He loves (9:27,28,30)

Because . . . READ SLIDE

TR: In spite of all God goodness . . .

Nevertheless . . .

were not mindful of the wonders,
disobedient, rebelled,
cast the law behind their backs,
killed God's prophets,
committed great blasphemies,
acted presumptuously,
turned a stubborn shoulder,
stiffened their neck, would not obey,
did not give ear

ESV

. . . Nevertheless . . . READ SLIDE

TR: And, so, what did God do? He did not make an end of them or forsake them. Rather . . .

Nehemiah 9:27, 28, 30

Therefore **you gave them into the hand of their enemies**, who made them suffer.


... **you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies**, so that they had dominion over them.

Therefore **you gave them into the hand of the peoples** of the lands.

ESV

we read . . . READ SLIDE

TR: We have hope for revival because God doesn't abandon us, He . . .




Why we have hope (9:6-31)

❖ God disciplines those whom He loves (9:27,28,30)

... disciplines those whom He loves.

-- If anything is going to break through hard, stony hearts ... it will be the wise discipline of God.

TR: Our hope rests in God. That He disciplines and that ...



Why we have hope (9:6-31)

- ❖ God disciplines those whom He loves (9:27,28,30)
- ❖ God's mercies are new every morning (9:17,19,27,28,31,32)

**. . . His mercies are new every morning.
-- I hope you caught that along the way.
-- Our hope for a revival is beyond just scheduling some special meetings, it is in the very character of God.**

TR: Review with me a bit of what we just read.

*(9:5b) Blessed be your glorious name,
which is exalted above all blessing and praise.*

- ❖ *Yahweh, the great God (8:6)*
- ❖ *He alone is Yahweh, Creator and Sustainer of all, worshiped by the angels (9:6)*

READ SLIDE (only heading)

-- What is God's "NAME?" Not just YAHWEH but all the aspects or attributes of His character and being.

-- God's glorious name, our only hope for revival, is . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Why is God's name exalted above all blessing and praise?

*(9:5b) Blessed be your glorious name,
which is exalted above all blessing and praise.*

- ❖ *He is ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in HESED, He does not forsake His people (9:17)*

Because . . . READ SLIDE


TR: Our hope rests in the wonderful truth that He is . . .

*(9:5b) Blessed be your glorious name,
which is exalted above all blessing and praise.*

- ❖ *A gracious and merciful God (9:31)*
- ❖ *The great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and HESED (9:32)*
- ❖ *The God who always deals faithfully (9:33)*

READ SLIDE

TR: Why do I still have hope, and even a more renewed hope than ever, for revival?



Why we have hope (9:6-31)

- ❖ God disciplines those whom He loves (9:27,28,30)
- ❖ God's mercies are new every morning (9:17,19,27,28,31,32)

Because the bringing back to fullness of the abundant life for the church rests on God.

TR: He is the God who can make . . .



. . . water come from the rock, as in the days of Moses.

TR: He is the God of Whom it was foretold in Ezekiel . . .

Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26

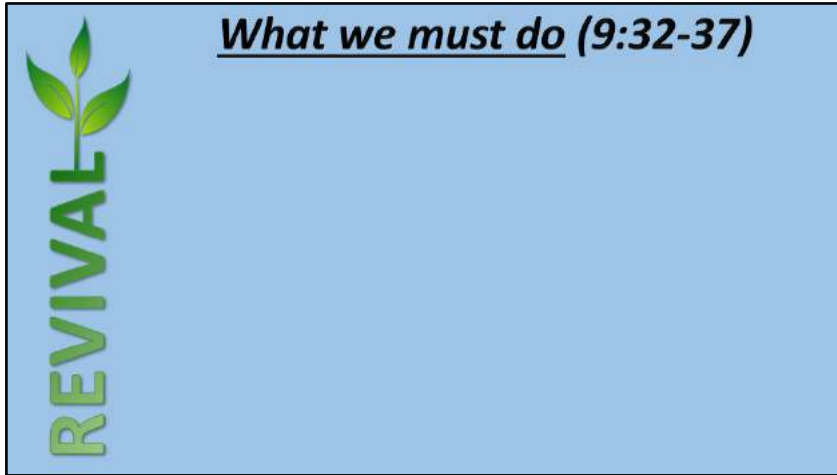
And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. **And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**

ESV

. . . that He would remove our heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh.

TR: As our hope rests in God's character, in a sense we can do nothing. But, that isn't fully true.



Our text does model several things we can do.

TR: We don't need to be . . .



. . . twiddling our thumbs, impatiently waiting.

-- Perhaps you would be willing to stand again.

TR: Look at 9:32

Nehemiah 9:32

"Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: (continue reading)

Nehemiah 9:33-34

Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for **you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.**

³⁴Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: (continue reading)

Nehemiah 9:35

Even in their own kingdom, and amid your great goodness that you gave them, and in the large and rich land that you set before them, they did not serve you or turn from their wicked works.

ESV

READ SLIDE


TR: (continue reading)

Nehemiah 9:36-37

Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. ³⁷And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and **we are in great distress.**

ESV

READ SLIDE**-- Please be seated.****TR: What can we do? What must we do?**



What we must do (9:32-37)

- ❖ Acknowledge that God has dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly (9:33)

We must . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Secondly, going back to what we read earlier . . .

Nehemiah 9:27b, 28b


And in the time of their suffering they
cried out to you and you heard them
from heaven . . .

Yet when they turned and cried to you,
you heard from heaven . . .

ESV

in verses 27 and 28 . . . READ SLIDE

**TR: While we cannot schedule revival, we can do what God
has allowed Nehemiah and Ezra to model for us . . .**



What we must do (9:32-37)

- ❖ Acknowledge that God has dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly (9:33)
- ❖ Respond to the discipline and turn back to God (cf. 9:27,28)

READ SLIDE (2nd point)

TR: Tying all this back to what we are to look for in a revival, today God's call to us is simply to . . .

What we must do (9:32-37)

REVIVAL

❖ Acknowledge your sin and turn to God (cf. 9:27,28)

CRY OUT TO GOD AND ...

❖ REPENT OF OUR LACK OF A PROFOUND HUNGER

❖ REPENT OF OUR LACK OF QUICK OBEDIENCE

READ SLIDE

- Perhaps Judy's note is a harbinger.
- But, I refuse to try to manipulate you in to responding.
- If God has spoken to you today, I invite you to cry out to Him.
- And, if He so moves you, come and bow your heads and worship the LORD with your face to the ground.