

My Why – Week 1

Thank you worship team and Pastor Brad. You put the stud in Bible study!

Welcome to CHC. Thank you for being with us today. We are in the middle of a movement church. God is up to some big things here at City Hope and I love that you are here.

Our mission is: **To invite everyday people to experience the hope of Jesus in every way.** That means you! We want you to experience Jesus and not just us.

As we begin, I want to give God some amazing praise. Last weekend as we celebrated Easter we broke some records. 2022 - 201, 2023 – 235, 2024 – 427.

Today we are celebrating that 11 more people are taking a step of obedience to Christ and getting baptized!!!

In the coming weeks we are going to be sharing some vision for the future. I believe God has given us some next steps as we seek His will for His church.

That's exactly what this is, his Church. I get the microphone, but it's all His. These are exciting times for sure. Jump in... If you want to know more about CHC...get in THE LOOP! This is our 3-class process of getting you all in!

We are kicking off a brand-new series of talks today entitled: **My Why (show series graphic)**

We believe that God has created every one of us with a divine purpose. He has a why for your life.

According to a 2021 survey, when asked, “How often do you wonder: ‘How can I have more meaning and purpose in life?’”

80% of Americans believe there is an ultimate purpose and plan for every person's life.
57% of Americans say they think about this at least once a month.
21% of Americans say they think about this daily or weekly.

In the Old Testament, we find a story framed around building, restoring, and a leader named Nehemiah. In the middle of this story, Nehemiah stands atop the completion of a massive project to rebuild the city walls around Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 6.15-16 | ¹⁵ The wall was completed in fifty-two days, on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul. ¹⁶ When all our enemies heard this, all the surrounding nations were intimidated and lost their confidence, for they realized that this task had been accomplished by our God.

(Show Card Tower) This was an incredible achievement for a couple of reasons: first, the walls had been torn down for years (possibly decades), next, several other attempts to rebuild the walls had failed, and finally, as we read above, this massive undertaking was finished in 52 days.

But this is not where our story begins, when our story begins the walls looked like this...
(Knock down card tower)

In the opening scene, we find Nehemiah in a royal court when a divine disturbance in the form of some men from Nehemiah's hometown far away show up.

This is how Nehemiah remembers it **Nehemiah 1.2-4** | ² **Hanani, one of my brothers, arrived with men from Judah, and I questioned them about Jerusalem and the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile.** ³ **They said to me, "The remnant in the province, who survived the exile, are in great trouble and disgrace. Jerusalem's wall has been broken down, and its gates have been burned."** ⁴ **When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for a number of days, fasting and praying before the God of the heavens.**

Life is good for Nehemiah. Back home, things are bad. Real bad! He had this divine disturbance in his life.

Divine disturbances often reveal something deeper going on.

He sits down and starts crying. Although it looks like Nehemiah is collapsing under the weight of this moment, he is actually building toward something else entirely.

Nehemiah 1.5-6a | **I said, LORD, the God of the heavens, the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps his gracious covenant with those who love him and keep his commands,** ⁶ **let your eyes be open and your ears be attentive to hear your servant's prayer that I now pray to you day and night for your servants, the Israelites.**

What do you do when a divine disturbance happens in your life?

Nehemiah does not waste this moment. He sits down, he weeps, he mourns, he fasts, and he prays.

This is why **Purpose, confirmed by prayer, is essential before you take any steps of faith.**

He took all of this to the Lord until He felt certain of God's purpose for him.

His prayer continues...

Nehemiah 1.6-9 | **I confess the sins we have committed against you. Both I and my father's family have sinned.** ⁷ **We have acted corruptly toward you and have not kept the commands, statutes, and ordinances you gave your servant Moses.**

⁸ Please remember what you commanded your servant Moses: “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. ⁹ But if you return to me and carefully observe my commands, even though your exiles were banished to the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place where I chose to have my name dwell.”

His prayer was different. It has elements of a human-centered prayer, but ultimately it was God-centered. He’s quoting scripture and reminding God of His promises.

Purpose built on God’s promises never fails.

God is not like you and me. We try, but we can’t keep ALL our promises.

Building your purpose on God’s promises is always going to be a great start.

(grab handful from fallen pile of cards) What is your purpose built on?

Do you even have anything to work with? Or do you just grab onto whatever you can get your hands on?

Well, I have this job, maybe this is my purpose...until you lose it. (toss card)

Well, I have this family, maybe this is my purpose...until the kids graduate and move out. (toss card)

Well, I have these friends, maybe they are my purpose...until they move away for college or start families of their own. (toss card)

Well, I have this retirement account and big plans...until the market loses value, and you have to work another year. (Toss card)

Nehemiah’s prayers begin to frame his purpose.

Nehemiah 1.10-11 | They are your servants and your people. You redeemed them by your great power and strong hand. ¹¹ Please, Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to that of your servants who delight to revere your name. Give your servant success today and grant him compassion in the presence of **this man. At the time, I was the king’s cupbearer.**

(Hold up a king card) Now “this man” is not just any man. He is King Artaxerxes. The same king who, just one book back (Ezra) in the Old Testament, shut down and stopped the very project Nehemiah is purposing to do.

Nehemiah would have to go through him if he even wanted to begin.

Thinking about this story makes me realize something. There is a King you and I have to go through in order to find our why.

There's a King we need to go to before we start building toward any purpose or plan. But, here's some Good News!

He's a Good King. He's a King who wants us to build lives filled with purpose and meaning, and a life that will stand in this life and last for eternity in the next life.

Are you taking Your Why – Your Purpose - to the King?

Are you trying to figure all of this out on your own?

Proverbs 3.5-7 I Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight. ⁷ Don't be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

Nehemiah had a divine disturbance, and we see his reaction was to go to the Lord.

How did he get to that place? How do you trust Him when you do not understand what is happening? When you cannot see a resolution. Why was this his first reaction.

We'll unpack more of Nehemiah's story in the coming weeks, but how did he get there?

I believe it's due to his foundation. His foundation was a trust in God that no matter what came his way, he could trust.

Trusting God is more than a feeling; it's a choice to have faith in what He says even when your feelings or circumstances would have you believe something different.

Your feelings and circumstances matter and are very much worth paying attention to. God cares about them both. But those things alone are not reliable enough to base your life on.

They can change at any moment, even in an instant. God, on the other hand, does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and therefore is worthy of your trust.

When divine disturbances hit, the outcome is based upon the strength of the foundation.

Illustration: The sounds of a great disturbance started around 1 a.m. on the morning of June 24, 2021. Residents of the 12-story condominium in the Miami suburb of Surfside, Florida were not sure what they were hearing. As the banging increased in volume, one

resident, Sara Nir, went down to the lobby to see what was going on just in time to see the guest parking area outside of her building collapse into the garage below. "I couldn't believe it. I felt like I was watching a movie," Nir said. Just a few minutes later, at approximately 1:22 a.m., the central and east wings of the Champlain Towers South, which had stood for nearly 40 years, collapsed in less than 12 seconds, killing 98 people. It is one of the deadliest building failures in modern history.

It was not the shockwaves of an earthquake that toppled this tower.
It was not the force of hurricane winds that knocked over the tower.
It was not even the work of terrorists on a mission to bring down the building.

Sadly, this tragedy was the result of several design flaws built right into the foundation of a building that held up and held together for 4 decades, before one terrible night when it all came crashing down.

How about you?

Does your life feel like smoking rubble piled high with disappointment, disaster, and destruction?

Maybe today is a moment of divine disturbance for you. God is speaking to you...

You can rebuild. Because you still have a purpose.

Does your faith feel like it is shaky under all the stress from the deconstruction, discouragement, and doubt you carry?

The foundations of your faith can be restored by shoring up your purpose.

Even if your life looks and feels fine, maybe the cracks are starting to show up in the foundations of your self-worth and sense of meaning.

You can be certain your life has meaning and a purpose worth pursuing.

A life built on purpose will stand the test of time.

Conclusion:

Just before the terrible collapse of the Champlain Towers South, on the sixth floor in unit 611, Iliana Monteagudo said she was awakened by a "higher power" that led her to the living room where she watched a two-inch crack split the wall in front of her in half. Aside: Talk about a divine disturbance. When she left her apartment, Monteagudo walked out the front door of her home and had a split-second decision to make. Turn left toward the hallway to the emergency stairwell by the elevators or turn right to the closer and more convenient stairwell. Thankfully, Iliana turned left toward the elevators, a decision that saved her life. Not knowing it, she had chosen to go to the side of the

building that was well-built and without a design flaw. Even as the tower collapsed behind her, she safely made it all the way down because every single one of her steps to life and freedom was taken on a firm foundation.

What's your why?

What's your purpose?

And is it built to last?

Is my why built on a firm foundation?

We believe God has a destiny and purpose for your life. And not only that, we believe God loves you and wants a relationship with you.

If you don't have a personal relationship with Christ that's the first step in developing a firm foundation. You can take that step today.

If your life feels like it's a crumbling building, you can still trust God. Rely on that foundation of who He is.

If you're ready to start living your life with purpose and fulfilling your why...start with going to God like Nehemiah.