

The Church Nursery

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Bible Text: Nehemiah 8:1-3; Nehemiah 8:8

Preached on: Sunday, September 25, 2022

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Nehemiah 8:1-8. Why don't I do this? Why don't I unpack it as I go? Um, I'm not recommending that for you younger pastors out there, you have to pastor 40 years before you do that, okay? But, um, the prominent message of Nehemiah 8:1-8 is the priority of the word and the priority of the preaching of the word. Here we actually have a worship service as such centered on the word of God and, um, starting in verse 1 notice how it's worded. Now a little of the context, um, the people have returned from exile in Babylon. They've been there quite a while and Ezra is something in semi-retirement, Brother David, Ezra is semi-retired, you're semi-retired so you guys kinda the same, but he still hangs around and helps out which is what you're doing, or being a problem whichever help out, whichever whichever it is. But Ezra is hanging around and he's helping the governor, Nehemiah, and, uh, here's what happens. Verse 1, Nehemiah 8, "And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel." Now I want you to grasp as we go through the the greatness, the reverence, the awesomeness, the foundational element of the word of God and the preaching of the word. So the Lord, last part of verse 1, the Lord had given this book to Israel through Moses.

Verse 2, "Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month." Now they had a special observance the first day of every month and this was the time for the reading and preaching of the word, not that it didn't happen other times but it was a special meeting. And notice men and women are included and that was not common in ancient Israel. Uh, so it kind of shows you the uniqueness and the specialness of this.

Verse 3, "He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday," now that's a long service, six hours or so maybe even longer, "in the presence," again, "of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Again, another emphasis on the reverence and importance of the word and the preaching of the word.

Verse 4, "Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium, "uh, you could say a wooden pulpit. It was a raised area, again, to give esteem and priority to this ministry of the word, "which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah,

Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiyah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left hand." Now these are the associate pastors as such, these are associate priests. They're all assembled there to give support to and to, uh, uh, to build to the esteem and the reverence of the moment.

All right, verse 5, "5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people," and that's why our forefathers in the faith, Baptist and Puritans alike, built churches with the pulpits in the center and elevated because we do not build the church on priestcraft, we do not build the church on a so-called altar and there are no altars. Altars are gone. The only after we have is Calvary. You can have steps and you can kneel at the steps and make it an altar as such, but you can kneel there and make it an altar. You go out in the mall and kneel and make it an altar. And we had one dear senior adult man who went out to his Ford truck and sat there for 30 minutes after a service and that became his altar where he was saved. We don't, we don't worship in certain buildings and places. This is not more holy than there. It's the gospel that saves, not the church structure that saves.

I got off on that, but he opened the book and the people stood up. Verse 6, "Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen!'" Look at the reverence and all they have, "while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground." Here's a people that have been in Babylonian pagan captivity and they've neglected the ordinances God gave Israel and one of them was the word and the the reading and the preaching of the word, and they're recovering it back. Notice that. Ezra's just beginning, he's just come to the pulpit and the people just bowed and said, "O God, O God, this is just so amazing." Have we grown so accustomed to the word that we've lost our reverence for what it is?

And again, to add to the esteem and the reverence in the high moment, verse 7, "Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place." Notice this isn't just some ceremony. There's, we're not mystics, we're not superstitious. We don't just go through some things here. Christianity is taking God's truth and getting it in our minds so that we understand God's great doctrines, and then our hearts learn to treasure these great doctrines, and then our lives, more so as we grow in sanctification, live out the truths that our minds understand, our hearts treasured. Are you with me, church? Pam and I were in Greece. You sent us over there and we went to those Greek Orthodox churches and it was mindless, senseless, superstitious ritual that those dear people were putting their hope in. Going in and kneeling and touching their chest and kissing the picture of the Virgin Mary, hoping somehow that helps get them to heaven. No, from ancient times the standard is the practice of the church is the book is open, the book is preached and explained, and the people understand, grasp the truth with their minds, treasure the truth in their hearts and live for God with their lives. That's why you must come in here practicing expository listening. This isn't a mindless event for you. This should be the most attuned, sober, disciplined moment of the week for us.

And "they read from the book of the law of God translated and give the sense and they understood the reading."

Well now, I want to bring you, my church, a commendation and an exhortation on supporting the truth that is taught in this text. While this truth I'm going to talk to you about is not the primary emphasis of the text, the preeminent issue in the text is the word and the preaching of the word. However, there is a secondary truth here that is essential to the primary truth and I want to talk about that secondary truth. Matter of fact, if the secondary truth is not practiced well, the primary truth could suffer greatly. So we're having something of a family meeting this morning as your father figure, your pastor and at 62 I feel more like that than I used to, I'm calling us to a family meeting about something practical, about a secondary truth that supports the primary truth that we are about as a people. This secondary truth comes to us quite clear in verses 2 and 3. Let's talk about those. those.

Notice what it says in verse 2, "Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women," that was unusual but notice the next phrase, "and all who could listen with understanding." Those that had some sort of mental or emotional deficiency couldn't grasp, couldn't sit still, might be a distraction, and certainly all of the children who are not old enough to listen with understanding were not allowed in the congregation to worship where the preaching of the word was taken place. Verse 3, "He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women," that was unusual, women are included, and "those who could understand," why and last phrase, "and all the people were attentive to the book of the law."

So I want to talk about the church nursery. My sermon is about the church nursery. Now two main points here. First of all, while we encourage you using the nursery for your children until your children reach the age of understanding, alright? While we encourage it's not a law, we're not legalists, but while we encourage you using the church nursery until your children are able to listen with understanding, 1) because this text makes it explicitly clear, distraction must be kept to a minimum during the preaching of the word. Now this takes makes it very clear what a high high and reverence we are to have when we come to the meeting of God's church and to the time of reading and the preaching of the word of God.

Now there are many other texts that we can look to. I'll just splash some of these out very quickly. Ah, Acts 17:11 talks about those who are "more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica," talking about the Bereans where "they received the word with great eagerness," notice the spirit, "examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Uh, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." Hebrews 2:1-3, "we must pay much closer attention," in other words, now that we have the finished, uh, canon of Scripture that gives us the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must pay much much closer attention "to what we have heard, so that we do not drift

away from it." In the old covenant that "word spoken to the angels," verse 2, "proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard." So the Lord came to earth. He gave us the doctrines the church is to stand on. He disseminated this through his apostles. The apostles wrote it down. Now we have the finished truth of God, and we must now give it the utmost attention and reverence, i.e. we want to make sure nothing distracts in any way from the reading and the preaching of the word of God in God's service.

All right, number 2, the second reason why we encourage using the nursery until your children reach the age of understanding. Well, because if we are going to have people who do this, this requires a nursery. If you're gonna have no distractions, then obviously we need to do what was required in ancient Israel, and that's how those who could possibly not understand and possibly cause a distraction not in the service. Now there there's a movement movement some time ago and, oh my goodness, you have one of these movements just come wave after wave after wave and they don't have a thimble full of Scripture in them but they sound so spiritual. Well, this movement was called the, uh, Family Integrated Church and the idea was one of the basic things was families should never be separated in the church. In every setting you must have mom and dad, grandma and grandpa, all the children and all the grandchildren, regardless of their age. And, uh, the problem with that is there's not a shred of Scriptural basis for that. It's that, "Well we want our children with us. It's important that they be with us," etc, etc. I understand that and that does sound wise, but that is to sow and the notion came out is that if you don't do it this way then you're not as godly as we are. If you don't do it this way, then you're not as spiritual or as committed as we are when the biblical texts would point out right the opposite is true. If you care about the undistracted preaching of the word, then you would make sure that those who are likely or possibly could be a distraction are not present in the service.

Well, there's a glaring lack of Scripture supporting that every time the church meets together all the family have to be together. For example, amplifying out their position a little bit more, they would say there can be no children's program, all the families must be there, can be no student program, no college program, etc., etc. And it's interesting, we had some families come through that kind of found somebody's book, that's why, they find a book and it's the book. The guy in the book said. What about that book? You may have 2,000 years of church history, we didn't find this, and boom, some guy finds it. So they read the book and decided they were going to do these things and they went out and formed them a little group or founded church that would support that movement, and then I found out that on some Friday nights they let a college guy take the the younger folks and go do an activity with them. I thought, "That looks like a youth group to me." It's like a youth program and they thought, "Well, it's okay because it's us." The real principle behind all these things is if you have godly parents involved in the children's program and godly parents involved in the student program, and a godly program for them, then it's fine. It's not just the fact of having it that makes it wrong. Well, I've beat that horse enough.

3. A third reason why we encourage using the nursery until children are able to listen with understanding is because it demonstrates the high view of the preaching of the word. You know it's interesting, we regularly seek child care when we are doing something important. Do we not in our lives? It's really rare for me to preach a funeral and have to compete with a child who wants to get the attention of everybody during the funeral because most of the time, folks will say, "Well, a child doesn't need to be in that setting. It's it's a reverent moment." Or maybe other things like if you believe that the family must always be together, do you take your child with you to a job interview? And what about date night with your spouse? Just take them then too. Why do we decide kind of in a secular plane that there's some things that it's appropriate to not have the smaller children who can't understand present, but they have to be in the church service?

Now, again, we're not legalistic here. That happens, and we're not against that. We don't think you're wicked for doing that in any way, shape or fashion, but we do have certain events that occur at certain ages. When my daughters reached 13, I had a special date with them where we talked about Christian courtship, something we need to revive a little bit around here, by the way, and, uh, talk about why we would approach their relationship with boys in a different way. Now that would have been inappropriate when they were 4 or 7, but 13 was the right age. There's graduations from a a a grade school and in middle school and high school. It happens at a certain age age and that's appropriate and this is something, uh, the Puritan fathers would call spiritual common sense. Don't look for some mystical, deep truth about it, it's just understandable why we would do this.

You know, if a child begins to understand, uh, the preaching of the word enough to be in the worship service, and I'll just use the age 7, it's probably quite a bit older than that, but I'll just use the age 7. Well, then they they from ages 2 through 6 if they came into the service before that age, from ages 2 through 6, they've attended about 500 worship services and what has happened in those 500 worship services when that child was ages 2 through 6? Well, they ate a lot of candy. They played with army men. They played with dolls. They played with coloring books. They watched Baby Einstein on your iPhone. They did all of these things but what have they learned? What probably they've learned is that the worship service is play time and candy time. Is that sin? No, I'm not saying that, but is that really what we want to accomplish? Did it really do any good?

Years ago dealing with this issue, we looked at some pastors we respected and all of them had a certain age, a certain time. Like like at the beginning of the 4th grade, we bring our young people in from children's church and we make a big deal out of it. Why? Because we reverence this place. We reverence what we're doing in here and that says to the children it's important, and now you're old enough to begin to understand what is happening, exactly what the text says Ezra had them do, only bring those who could listen with understanding.

4. A fourth reason why we encourage using the nursery until children are able to listen with understanding is because it helps parents avoid an unrealistic expectation of their children's behavior and over-disciplining them. Man says, "Well, I tell you what, my boy sits still and listens from age 2." Well, I have two things to say about that. Maybe he is a

child prodigy. Maybe he's one in 10 million that literally, literally could sit still and listen, but now listening is I don't get, I can't get in that little boy's brain if he actually did listen, at least he was still and he was quiet. But I tell you what I have seen too many times in those contexts, I've seen some beaten down children. They're still and they're quiet but usually they're spiritless robots. They're over-disciplined. And I think if we're not careful we insist on such a thing and we're pinching them and pulling them and squeezing knees and take them out to get spankings, I think that you get into the realm of cruelty and maybe being a non-Christian. You just don't regularly take children in places that are not fit for them and act and expect them to act like adults.

Now, if you got through, you took brought yours and you got through it, okay, praise the Lord, but generally speaking, that doesn't happen. I think this is why Ephesians 6 warns us do not provoke your children to anger. There are certain places and certain things and certain ways you can discipline where you are being overbearing and unrealistic in your expectation and you don't need to be that way. So having them in the nursery or in the children's church avoids that temptation to over-correct and over-discipline. Sunday doesn't need to be a day you dread because you have to prepare for war with a strong-willed child. And too often, punishment in those context is out of revenge because they embarrassed you instead of you correcting them out of love. Moms and dads, we don't correct our children out of revenge because they've embarrassed us, we correct them for them because we love them and we want them to glorify God.

5. A fifth reason why we encourage using the nursery until a child can listen with understanding because it could help with child idolatry. Now, pastor, none of us struggle with child idolatry. Well, just about half of you do. And so could I. Leaving your child in the care of loving adults who are praying for them, singing to them, reading the Scriptures to them, teaching them at their level the best they can so that you, mom and dad, but primarily mom, so that you and others can hear the preaching of the word without hindrances may do you some good. If you're a helicopter mom, it might do you some good to face that fear and discover they lived. They made it through it and I wasn't there for an hour and a half. So I'm fussing at you a little bit. Yes, I am. Some of you need to pull back. You're too overprotective, you're too guarding. You're too mothering. So this might be a place God would help you to understand you've made your child an idol. Sure, you love them with all your heart. Sure you'd give your life for them. I would mine and my grandchildren, but I rather not see them in here when they can be in children's church or nursery.

6. Y'all liking this sermon.? You okay? We doing alright? 6. I don't preach it very often, about every 10-15 years. Another reason why we encourage using the nursery until your children are to the age to listen with understanding is because the major purpose of the worship service is not teaching a child to sit still and listen. This isn't the place to discipline your child. That's other places. Now it can be a place. A man told me just recently, "I had to get up and go, uh, either talk to or sit by one of my, I think this is like a middle a middle school child because they weren't acting right in the service." I said, "You didn't bother me. I'm glad you did that." That may happen from time to time but when you've got a real little one in there, it's going to happen a lot of the time. And you

gotta remind it, that's not the place for training my child about sitting still and being quiet.

If you regularly disrupt the service or those around you to discipline or correct your child, then you in effect are putting your child and their training over the congregation's need to hear the word. Now think about that. "Well, they're precious and they're special and I'm just trying to teach them." Well, so are those other 50 precious and special children. The public worship hour is not the place to train your child. It's the place for all to listen and understand the preaching of the word.

7. A seventh reason why we encourage you to use the nursery for your children, because it isn't good for our children to associate church with discipline and correction. That's the other side of the coin. You've heard those stories many times, a child doing this and that, the father picking him up and doing this and that and that happened to my wife when she was a little girl. She decided, Miss Pam decided she would make an empire out of the hymnbooks one Sunday morning, and she piled them up real high and she sat on top of them, and Clifford went and apprehended her and they left the service, and she never piled the hymnbooks up again. Well, I don't know if they'd ever heard a sermon like this but that does happen. If it happens, do what you gotta do, okay?

Now I didn't grow up really in church, went to church as a small child then we were out of church for years and, uh, I remember when I was converted and first started attending First Baptist Church of Lawrenceburg, TN, Charles Owens Dinkins was the pastor. I learned the doctrines of grace under Charles Owens Dinkins, a Southern Baptist pastor. I also learned something else, you'd better not get up and move while he's preaching. I mean, we were sitting there one morning and a little fella got up and got about halfway down and he said, "Son, stop right there. Where you going?" To the bathroom. "Go on but let's not do it again." Boy, there were a lot of full bladders the rest of the weeks in that church. Well, you just gotta have a little of that every now and then, and I haven't done that in a long, long, long time and I don't plan to do it. I'm not trying out to prove something but this shouldn't be the place your children associate with, "This is where I get corrected and pinched and threatened all the time." That's not what we want our children to think about the worship service.

8. Reason why we encourage parents to use the nursery until their children can listen with understanding because it helps parents to hear the word with delight or with discipline and delight. I mean, here you are, you've fought with sin and Satan and yourself all week, moms and dads, you need to hear the preaching of the word. And there's so many avenues, so many avenues for the world, the flesh and the devil to attack a new mother. New mothers just constantly feel like failures. Their hormones are all over the place. They're tired. They're struggling with child idolatry. They need to hear God's word preached. Satan would love to say, "Yeah, but that precious baby, that's your that's really what needs your attention." No, you need an hour and a half, 2 ½ hours a week of hearing the preaching of the word of God. New mothers need the unhindered preaching of the word possibly more than any other segment of the church because you're being attacked in so many ways in that season of your life.

9. The ninth reason we encourage parents to use the nursery until their children can listen with understanding, because it helps to remove the temptation to listen carelessly, not carefully, carelessly to the preaching of the word. One lady told me few years ago, she said, "Pastor, when my children are with me, I hear maybe one-third of what you say. Maybe one-third of what you say." How easy it is to cuddle a precious baby and neglect to listen with sobriety and attentiveness to the preaching of the word. I mean, that seems okay, doesn't it? "But it's a precious baby." Yes, but that baby is not more important than you hearing the word of God. It is just an hour and a half.

10. I've got 15, but I'm going pretty fast. A tenth reason why we encourage you to put your children in the nursery until the child can listen with understanding is because a sweet, precious, sleeping, beautiful child is a sweet, precious, sleeping, beautiful child. There's no way I could sit on a pew, look in front of me on the next pew and see a sweet, precious, sleeping, beautiful child and it not get my attention. And here's what I'll be doing. I just, I'm addicted to seeing a baby smile and I can't help it. It's worse than cocaine. And a beautiful, sweet, precious child is just going to get attention and that goes back to why Paul taught ladies about modesty in the church, because you'll draw attention and that's not where the attention doesn't need to be on you, ladies, it needs to be on the preaching of the word. That's why Brother Tom goes to great lengths with our singers and our choir that there's nothing close to inappropriate or sensuous because that draws attention away from what we're about.

11. The reason why we encourage you to use the nursery until a child can listen with understanding because it does not limit the role of parents in the lives of their children. I find no evidence that children who stayed in a nursery adjust poorly to worship service or to life in general. I mean, I've never heard someone say, "You know their children, they grew up and they're rebels. They don't love God. They put him in that nursery. I told you that would happen." You've never heard that because it's not true.

In balance with that or adding to that, number 12, the 12th reason why we encourage you to use the nursery until your children reach the age of understanding is because hundreds of adults sitting around you stayed in the nursery and they treasure Christ. It didn't affect them for Jesus. In fact, being a parent of young children and being able to listen to the word without the distraction of your child will make you a better parent and end up making them better children.

13. The 13th reason why we encourage you to use the nursery until your children can listen with understanding is because one child with a tummy-ache can disrupt a congregation of 1,000. Say you have a small church, 75 to 100 people, and you have one or two small children, they're going to disrupt the service every two to three weeks. If you have a large church like ours approaching 1,000 times thousands sometimes in attendance, you probably would have 30 small children if you had no nursery, and they would disrupt the service two to three times every service. Then I have a pretty amazing, uh, concentration. I I, people come to me and tell me about things that happen, and I

don't remember them because I'm very wrapped up in what I'm doing. But it can happen, and it does happen.

A 14th reason why we encourage you to use the nursery until your children reach the age of understanding is because we love your children and deeply care for their souls. In other words, we are very intentional in our children's ministry. Very intentional that from the tiniest bed babies up that we are surrounding them with the truth of the word of God and we use the utmost safety protocols. We have almost 100 cameras in our children's building. 100 cameras. We see almost every inch of every room all the time. Protocols about changing diapers. Protocols about going to the restroom to make sure there's always more than one so it's safety is utmost. Do you think I'd put my children in there if I thought there was any thought of something happening? God forbid, I guess it can happen but we're doing everything that can be done to love and care for your children.

A 15th reason why we encourage you to use the nursery until your child reaches the age of understanding is because we are constantly doubling our efforts to make every effort to make sure our nursery is excellent in every way. I always tell the nursery people, spend the money, get the best, get the newest, do the best. We want to have the very, very best for our babies in our nursery.

All right, let's shift gears. Now there could be many more, but let's shift gears. Let's go to the other side of the coin. This is what you've been waiting for, why you must take your turn serving in the nursery as an adult. You must take your turn serving in the nursery. 15 points. No, I've only got two because if these two don't work, you're unhelpable, okay? If these two don't work then I I can't help you.

A. Christian duty requires it. As Christians we have duties. We have responsibilities. Now I know a lot of evangelists and preachers teach you that getting saved gets you out of hell hell and gives you your best life now. Well, they left out a whole bunch like carrying your cross. Like praising the Lord when people persecute you and say all sorts of evil against you. And your duty is to your local church family.

Just a couple of texts here, Galatians 6:3-5, "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Brother or sister, are you unintentionally maybe thinking you're something, you don't have to do your turn? Somehow it didn't apply to you? Do I need to even say this? Christianity is not where you go to church, Christianity is a church you belong to. You belong. It's your family and there's duties in a family and nobody's exempted. I don't know how how it worked in your home, but in my home growing up, all of us children had duties and responsibilities and there was never a dialogue about it. My mama was a monotheistic, I guess you could say. It was, it was one way. There's a reason why my teenage friends called my mother, Sergeant Geraldine. But I learned to do things I didn't want to do. I learned to do things I didn't like to do. I learned to do things when I didn't want to do them. And we have duties and we're not special. Anyone thinks he's something when he's nothing, he deceives himself.

"But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another." Now I know this isn't the primary application of the text, but the principle does apply. Verse 5, "For each one will bear his own load." In the local church, in the Galatia region, Paul was saying, "You churches make sure all the members bear their own load." Bear your responsibility. And my goodness, seeing these young moms and dads who need all the help we can give them, be able to sit and hear the preaching of God's word which is the hub of the wheel of all we're about as Christians in the church, seeing them able to hear the preaching of the word maybe take an hour and a half out of our schedule every three months to love their precious babies for them, that's worth it. That's a duty that's worth it. You should joy in that. Think about that mom. I don't wanna over-dramatize this thing, but the preaching of the word may prevent a broken home for that precious baby and 1,001 other things.

So it's a duty. Christian duty includes it and requires it. Well, 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15. "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either." Now again, the main application is there's this community of believers and they're helping each other and some are getting lazy and not doing their part.

Verse 11, "For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." He said if somebody is not going to do their duties in the church, do their part of the load, then separate them out and put them to shame. That's church discipline.

Now, I'm not advocating that we'll start church discipline if you miss your tour in the nursery, but we might ought to. Why is this a duty that's optional? Some have encouraged, "Pastor when we gonna start Sunday night back?" When I get enough nursery workers so that the same five or six or eight ladies aren't doing it over and over and over and over and over again. Now, you're not, you're not mean, rebellious, ugly people. There's not going to be any meetings called together in the next week or two that says, "What y'all think about pastor's message?" We don't do that here.

Christian duty requires it, secondly, this is the crown jewel of it all, Christian love requires it. It's not because it's my duty, it's not because it's my responsibility. That's true but love trump's them all. I love these people. I love these babies. I want to have the best mom and dad they can have. One of the least things I can do is make sure those moms and dads hear the preaching of the word without distraction.

Jesus said in John 13:35, "By this all men will know You're my disciples if you have love for one another." That's not love for the world, though that love grows when you're a Christian. I don't mean the world in the sense of the world, I mean the people in the

world. It's a specific covenant, devoted, life-sacrificing love for the church, my local church family.

1 John 3:16, for "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Well, nobody has been asked at this point to give your very physical life for your church family. You might be, but you haven't so far. Would you not give an hour and a half to keep that baby, to love that parent that might need to come and hear the word of God preached without distraction? Christian love requires it.

Now look, there's always exceptions for not taking a child to the nursery. I understand that. Here's what I'd ask you to do: sit toward the back and sit on the aisle so if the child gets unruly, you can go right out the doors and listen to the service out there. Nobody is going to judge you for that. I hope most of you don't decide to do that, but if that's where you are you're not a second class citizen. We love you and thank God for you. But we should not allow a child to repeatedly take over a worship service where the preaching of the word is going forward.

So there may be exceptions and then those keeping the nursery, those taking their turn in the nursery, you may have a physical reason you can't do that. Just tell us, we respect that. We're not legalistic about this. You may have an emotional reason. There are people in times in their life that emotionally they just can't handle it. We understand that and that'll be kept confidential. Just tell us that. But for the great majority of us, we need to do like the model of Nehemiah 8 and so reverence, so note the high honor, the critical nature of the worship service and the preaching of the word that we do what they did and don't bring into the service those who are not yet able to listen with understanding. So let's gird up our loins in the biblical sense and let's get our names back on the nursery list and let's take our tour of duty in the nursery for the good of the church and for the glory of God.