



THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL

Part 6 of Nehemiah

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Nehemiah 4:15-23 | April 01, 2007

You're listening to, "Nehemiah, a city within the city," a teaching series by Pastor Mark Driscoll." The following is a presentation of Mars Hill Church in Seattle. For more audio and video content, visit marshillschurch.org.

[Music]

The hope of Mars Hill since the beginning is that Seattle is a great city and what it needs is a great city within that city, a city that loves Jesus, a city that believes Scripture, a city that lives for the good of the whole city, not just its own self-interest. And so Mars Hill started off as an experiment to see if we could build a city within the city that would love the city and seek the transformation of the city as the city meets Jesus.

[Music Ends]

Good evening.

[Applause]

We've had a great few weeks. Couple weeks ago, our Acts 29 network assessed three dozen potential church planners just for the US. We planted over 100 churches through that network, and we will see, by God's grace, 1,000 planted, and we're well on our way to doing that. Then we had a theological training conference. I think about 400 people got trained. And last week, Dr. Bruce Ware was kind enough to cover the pulpit. My wife and I were in Vegas working on our tan, sleeping in. It was very nice. No children. Though we love them, it's nice to get a break occasionally, no cell phone, no e-mail, just me and my wife and sunshine. I liked it. I liked it a lot. We had a great time.

And then coming back this week, we're back into the book of Nehemiah 4. And today we opened the building at the West Seattle campus. I know many of you have prayed. You've gone there to serve. You've given generously financially. For those of you who don't know, we were gifted a 50,000-square-foot building, a church that was in need of some repairs. We put a few million dollars into it. Today, we did our unofficial opening. All the advertising goes out next week for Easter. And we official kick off that campus. But today, we had over 900 people there. It is already over capacity. Needs to immediately go to services as quickly as possible. And the children's ministry I think had almost 150 children. And so that campus is going exceedingly well.

Things in Shoreline are going well. We're still pursuing a full-time facility there. And there are no less than seven other facilities that we're presently exploring. Churches are offering us buildings in this state, in this country, and in other countries to expand. I don't even know what that means, so we'll figure it out. The one thing we do have planned is Exec Elders, as we have enough services, campuses, and seats opening up in time for next fall to double and allow 12,000 people to worship Jesus here in one of America's least church cities. So do be in prayer.

We'll keep you with the details forthcoming. The big campus kickoff in West Seattle went exceedingly well, absolutely thrilled. There were people there – I'll tell you one woman who was there. Her name's Ethel. She got saved in that building a year ago this week, 65 years ago. The same week, she was 65 years ago in that same building. And she was there worshiping with us today and cried through most of the service. It was very, very, very cool. She just happened to be married to the old pastor of the church and she's prayed for many years. And really, it was a delight to fill that building up and see here prayers finally get answered. So it was a great day. Good to have you all with us.

If you don't know who I am, my name is Mark. I'm one of the pastors here at the church. Privileged to be part of a wonderful team and serve with some wonderful men and women. And my privilege to you is that I get to teach the Bible a lot here at Mars Hill. And were in the book of Nehemiah. And so if you've got a Bible, you can go to Nehemiah 4 and we'll look at a short section of Scripture beginning in Verse 15. And I'll go ahead and pray in a moment and get us started. Will you find that place in your Bible?

Two things that are wonderful this week as well. You'll want to come back on Friday for one of our Good Friday services. We do 'em really good at Mars Hill. When it comes to dark, depressed, moody, man, we tap that Indy Rock vibe. It goes really sweet for us on Good Friday. We do it good. You'll walk outta here just totally depressed. It'll be perfect. And then come back on Easter Sunday when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. That is typically our biggest Sunday of the year, and we're so glad that Jesus is alive and that he's at work. So we'll celebrate that next Sunday.

I'll go ahead and pray and we'll get right to work.

Father, we thank you so much today for opening up the building in West Seattle and filling it beyond capacity. God, we thank you for the book of Nehemiah as it shows that our mission, like theirs, is to build a church that is a city within the city that seeks to serve and seek the transformation and the good of the whole city. God, thank you as we've studied the book of Nehemiah is about building different gates, openings, into the city that you've allowed us to spread throughout this city, and to open up various campuses as proverbial gates to welcome people in to learn about Jesus.

And so, God, as we study a little more today in the book of Nehemiah, I pray that what you would have for us would be intensely practical and helpful individually and corporately. I pray that our time would be pleasing to you, that it would be profitable to us. It's always my prayer that Jesus would be the center of our study, and that the Holy Spirit would enable us to understand who he is and what he has done and what his intention is for our life. So we ask that you would bless our time as we ask it in Jesus' good name, amen.

Tell you what. We'll go ahead and start right into Nehemiah 4:15. The situation is this. The city of Jerusalem is destroyed. The church there is destroyed, and God's people have been called after 141 years of neglect to relocate to that city, to rebuild its walls, to rebuild its gates so that they can have safety, then rebuild the buses and the homes and church. And in so doing, they've undergone some fierce opposition. People have opposed them. Their lives have been threatened. But they love God and they're hanging in there and they're serving very, very faithfully.

And this week, we learn how they proceeded in faith and trust of God beginning in Chapter 4, Verse 15. And unlike many weeks, I'll just read the whole section. And I've only got basically two points for you today. It's a very simple sermon. There's not a lot of theological debate. It's not a huge controversial section, but it's intensely practical.

He says, "When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work." So the threats against them apparently didn't work, and God's people returned to the work that God had called them to. "From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail" – alright. There's a Jack Bauer ministry right there. Those guys are on guard, gonna defend the church and the city. I mean these are intensely committed people.

These are regular folk like you and I, and part of their church new member packet was a shield, a bow, a sword, a cup, a flat jacket, a helmet, a mouthpiece. I mean you know it's game time when we hand you that at your baptismal service. But that's how it was going down then – "and the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, who were building the wall. Those who carried burden were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapons in the other." That's a good deal.

"And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me." That would be in case they were attacked, then the man would sound the trumpet and everyone would come together to defend themselves. "And I said to the nobles, to the officials, and the rest of the people, 'The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall far from one another in the place where you hear the sound the trumpet rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.'

"So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from break of dawn until the stars came out. I also said to the people at that time, 'Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.' So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each of us kept his weapon in his right hand." Simple text of Scripture. Go on a bit of a tangent.

My favorite preacher/teacher outside of Scripture is a man named Charles Hadden Spurgeon. I'm a Spurgeonite. I love this guy. He lived in the 19th Century, started preaching at his teens. Took over a church at 18. He preached live upwards of 20 million people heard him. His church grew to 5,000 in a day when that was unheard of. They didn't even have sound systems. They would print out his sermons and 200 million to 300 million people purchased transcripts of his sermons.

Furthermore, he published 140 books. He struggled with gout his whole life. He died at a fairly young age because of health complications. And he is just an absolute hero to me. I read every biography I can find on him. I just find so much inspiration from this great man. He'll be one of the first people I look up in Heaven.

Interestingly enough, at one point in his life, he was so influential and such a massive voice in Christianity across the world that he felt compelled to start a newspaper. And in thinking of what title he could have for his newspaper, he ended up, curiously enough, in the 4th chapter of Nehemiah. I mean, it seems like a very mundane text. It's about a building project. But it goes to show that sometimes even the most apparently simple text have some very important insights, so we take the time to study them and meditate on them, and to pull out the lessons that God would have for us therein.

And so he decided based upon Nehemiah 4, to title his magazine, his newspaper, The Sword and the Trowel, okay? The Sword and the Trowel. So let me explain these to you. I usually don't do this, but I brought some props, okay? Now I know a lot of you went to college, but if there's anyone here who has a truck and lunchbox and a hardhat, calluses on their hand and doesn't sit in a cubicle and type for a living – maybe there's one of you at Mars Hill, you could tell me, what is this?

Response: Trowel.

Yeah, a trowel, unless you're a single guy, and then it's a egg flipper. It's actually a trowel. Some guys like, "That's a spatula right there." No, it's actually a trowel. Nice, sturdy trowel. What do you do with the trowel? You build things. You lay bricks. You're a bricklayer, you lay bricks. So the way it works, you lay a brick, mortar, brick, mortar, brick, mortar. The trowel lays the mortar. And what do you do with that? You build.

You build a wall. That's what they were doing in the days of Nehemiah. You build a house. You build a church. You build a fence for your kids. You

build things with a trowel. Trowel work is very important. But not only were they to wield the trowel, they were also to wield, my personal favorite, the sword. Didn't you love the way that sounded? We'll do it again. I just love the way that sounds. Just listen, listen. It just sounds like the Holy Spirit being released. I mean it's awesome. Just sounds so good.

So this actually is a bayonet off of an old rifle. Okay? A guy with a gun is very scary. A guy with this on the end of his gun is extra scary. Alright? That's a guy, "I wouldn't shoot you. Instead, I'm just gonna chase ya." That's that kinda guy. And I know when I'm pulling this out, some of you are like, "Is that a real sword?" Yep. "Put I'm a pacifist." And I know some of you are. That's cool. We love you. The rest of aren't. We'll cover you. You'll be fine. You'll be fine.

[Applause]

So what do you do with this? What do you do with this? You kill people. You kill people. That's what they're for. The sword is very important, and they work, actually, together because with the trowel you build something. This is the point of Nehemiah 4. But you can't just build something. You also need to defend and protect it. Otherwise, everything you've worked so hard for is going to be destroyed, stolen, taken. And everything you've worked for us is just gonna go away.

And so as we get into it, I'm gonna ask you a few questions. First is what has God called you to build? Has God called you to build a relationship with Jesus? Has God called you to build a marriage or work toward marriage where one day you can build your marriage, or to be a parent and to build your children and your family or your grandchildren? Has God called you to build a business to help underwrite all the other things he's called you to build? Has God called you to build a ministry or an aspect of ministry at this church, children's ministry, community group, usher, greeter? There's an aspect of ministry that God has called you to build.

See, so much of our life is really – it's trowel work, man. It's working your job. Paying your bills. Loving your spouse. Raising your kids. Walking with Jesus. Serving your church. It's trowel work. It's a lotta work. But the problem is, once something is built or it's in the process of being built, in our world, Satan and demons and sin and sinners are real and they will work against everything that you're trying to build out of your loving relationship with Jesus, if you're a Christian.

And so here's what we're gonna talk about. We're gonna talk about the work of the sword, how to defend and protect, physically and spiritually. We'll talk about both kinds of defense, 'cause we get attacked physically and spiritually. How to defend yourself. And at our church, I think we stress a lot about trowel work, right, how to make a budget and fill out your resume and get a job and find your pants and court a woman and stop doing whatever it is you're addicted to and put your life together with a marriage and family and kids and business and just all the trowel work, the practical stuff of life.

But in addition to that, you've gotta work on not only just keeping your head down and building your life, but occasionally looking up and saying, "Where is the potential danger? Who or what could really undermine and undo everything that I'm working so hard to build? And how can I best, most wisely, officially, effectively do that proverbial kind of sword work whereby I not only build something, but I defend it?" So I'll get into some examples. And my point in this is to be intensely practical. I'm gonna give you some things to contemplate, to meditate on this week, to consider about your own life. And I'll do so by way of analogy.

Let's say first thing, do you want to build a spiritual life with God. You want to have your sins forgiven. You wanna talk with Jesus. You want to know the living God because he knows you. Well, the question is will there be any opposition to that. Well, sure. That's a very real spiritual battle that Satan and demons are real, and that if your desire is to know Jesus, the God of the Bible, and to walk with him and obey him, you can assure yourself that you're going to meet spiritual resistance.

Satan doesn't want you to know the truth. He wants you to believe lies. Satan doesn't want you to have freedom. He wants you to be enslaved to sin. Satan doesn't want you to have joy. He wants you to be absolutely confused and despairing.

Let me tell you how this works is that Satan is real. Some of you experience spiritual warfare, and you may not even be aware of it. Satan works according to Revelation 12:10 through accusation. He's the accuser of the children of God. He accuses them, Scripture says, day and night. You will hear things, maybe even in the third person which indicative that it is a spiritual demonic attack. "You are a failure. You should kill yourself. You are not loved of God. Your sins cannot be forgiven. Your future has no hope. Your past is so dark that you can never escape it."

Those are demonic accusations. But what they are is lies because John 8 tells us that Satan is a liar. All he does is lie. But if you believe the lies, he'll destroy your life. And so we combat those kinds of lies and accusations with the truth. And Jesus says that Scripture in John 17 is truth. It says, "Father, sanctify them by the truth. Your Word is truth." So counterfeit – rather, the counterfeit lies of their enemy are only ward against with the truth claims of Scripture. And what does Scripture say in Ephesians and Hebrews about Scripture? It's a what? It's a sword.

I mean it is actually a sword for spiritual battle, no less than a steel blade is a sword for physical battle. So when Satan comes to you with lies, you respond by knowing Scripture and saying the truth. When Satan comes to you with an accusation, you come back and say, "No, no, no. Jesus died for all of my sins." Some of you are haunted by the sins of your past. Even though you've repented to God and you've told him you're sorry and you know that Jesus went to the cross and suffered and died in your place, and he forgives you and gives you new life. You know that. You've stopped sinning in the ways that you were. You have lived a different life. But you keep being condemned by those voices who come in on behalf of the enemy.

And the truth is that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. That's what Romans says, that there is nothing you can do, have done, will do that could separate you from the love of God and Jesus Christ. There is no sin that God cannot, will not forgive through the cross of Jesus Christ.

And much of your spiritual life is gonna be the enemy condemning you, accusing you, lying to you.

And it is your holding the sword of Scripture, praying on Scripture, meditating on Scripture, knowing Scripture, and being able to contend, to contend with the truth and to literally pull the sword of Scripture out of its scabbard and to say, "That is a lie," and, "That is a half truth," and, "That is an accusation," and, "That is a condemnation," and, "That is not what the God of Bible says." the God of the Bible says that I am made in his image and likeness. The God of the Bible says that Jesus died for all my sins. The God of the Bible says that I get a new life and I get to become a new creation in Christ, and old things passed away, and I get to be made new. And I don't have to believe lies and I don't have to suffer accusations. And I don't need to live under condemnation because, instead, I have Christ.

And the spiritual battle is real. And for you to grow in your relationship with Jesus, Ephesians 6 would be a great place for you to read this week. It talks about faith, trusting in the finished work of Jesus. It talks about prayer which is one of the ways we contend with principalities and powers and spirits. It's about believing Scripture and taking up God's sword, being ready to not just lay down and take the attacks of the enemy, but to contend through prayer and Scripture with the truth and the dependency on God.

It's not just enough to become a Christian. You must then defend, earnestly content for. Paul says else where, "You're relationship with God." And if you're growing apathetic or weary, you need to maintain a vision that God's glory is the source of your joy, and that in living for and like and with Jesus, is the only path to abiding and true happiness. And to make sure that you are praying, to make sure that you are reading Scripture, and to make sure that you're walking in fellowship with other Christians who love you and love Jesus.

The first thing that God tells us in the Bible is that it is not what? It is not good to be alone. God says everything is good, and then the first thing he says, "This is not good. It's not good to be alone." So our relationship with God, our spiritual life is not something to do in and of ourselves. It takes relationship. Ours is a Trinitarian God who lives in loving community. God has made us in his image and likeness. That means many things, among them, is the great and grant truth that we were meant for a relationship. We were meant to know people and be known.

We were meant to love and be loved, to communicate, to have relationship and friendship. And you have to have that. One of the tactics of the enemy to destroy you spiritually in this spiritual war for your soul is to isolate you so that around you don't have people who pray for you and walk with you and love you and speak the truth into your life and encourage you and hold you accountable and walk in the light with you as he is in the light so that the blood of Jesus can cleanse and forgive sin and you can have fellowship with one another like 1 John says.

So our encouragement to you would be get in a community group. Get in a class. Get plugged in. Pursue friendships. Make sure you're reading Scripture and believing it, because that is your sword. Prayer connecting with the living God so that you can hear his voice. You can know his heart. And then the condemnation, the accusation, the lies that'll just take away your joy, then they won't have any ground in your life. Maritally as well. I'll give you some other things to think about.

How many of you are married? Some of you. A couple of you. How many of you – they're all sitting up front for some reason. So how many of you are not yet married, but aspire to be married someday? Okay. You're all in the back. Great. You guys – apparently this is like reserved seating here. Okay. How many of you who are married, you could testify with me to those who are not yet married that when you get married, it doesn't fix anything? Is that true? How many of you thought, "I'm single. I need to get married. That'll fix everything"? Oh, no. It doesn't.

Satan doesn't even show up until Genesis 3 after the wedding. Satan doesn't even show up till after the wedding. When you're single, you just think that Satan is against you. When you get married, he came to your wedding, and he's following you on your honeymoon. That's how it goes.

Now let me say this. A couple ways to defend your marriage – and we're talking about sword work of defending – first is to agree upon marriage, gender, and family. You don't just need to marry a Christian. The great myth is you marry a Christian and if you're a Christian and they're a Christian, you live happily ever after. No. The divorce rate for those who profess to be Christians is a little bit higher than those who profess to not be Christians. I think because there's a naïve gullibility. "We're two Christians. It'll be fine." You have to be like-minded and in agreement.

It's hard enough to work together and build your life. If you don't agree on what you're even doing and who has what role and responsibility, you're gonna have all kinds of conflict. I told you the story before, but I remember talking to a single guy about this some years ago. My wife and I were on vacation and he's like, "Man, your wife is nice. She likes being a mom and she stays home with the kids." He's like, "How'd you make her do that?" like we arm-wrestled and she lost or something. I was like – I said, "No. We agreed. I married a woman who wanted the same thing as me. I want to be provider and she wants to be mom, and we agree on how we wanna raise our kids and what a man and woman in a marriage – we agree on all of that."

So I married someone who was like-minded. For those of you who are single, marry someone who is like-minded. And once you marry them, then the rest of your life is spent really getting to know them. And let me say this. If you go to the Christian bookstore, you will see in the marriage section a long list of books that have the words "manage and intimacy" in the title. It's like you cannot publish a Christian marriage book unless it has the word intimacy in the title, because that's the word that women want to see in the title for the book that they're going to buy. Alright? "Intimacy. That's a good book." ~~That's not~~ you say the word intimacy, the women are like, "I want intimacy," and the men are thinking, "That doesn't sound so good. like I'm gonna be finger-painting and I'm gonna have to cry and it doesn't sound so good. Intimacy. Is that where we watch chick flicks and drink herbal tea and talk about our feelings? I'll be out in the garage. I'll be – I gotta fix that leaf blower." So let me use a different – you ladies, keep that word. Nice word, good word. (Claps) Love that word. Keep that word.

Let me use another word for the men that will work better, but I'll bring 'em together before you blog about it. Now I will use the work dominion, okay? Men love the word dominion. Has a totally different connotation. It has a connotation of an explorer, going to explore a continent or going to

explore a whole new world. You with me? 'Cause this is how I'm selling it. Pretty good here.

Now, most men when they get married, they've just landed on the beach, but they haven't really explored the woman, if you know what I'm talking about. Okay? Now it's not just enough to be a conqueror. You need to be an explorer, and that's what marriage is. And the books on intimacy are women's say of saying, "I would like to be explored, emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually. I want you to know my past, my present, my future, my hopes, my dreams, my fears. I want you to know my mind and what I'm thinking, my heart what I'm feeling, my soul, what I'm grieved by and working through and where God's at work in my" – and the woman wants you to know her.

She wants you to know her deeply. And her request is not unbiblical because it says in Genesis in one of the older translations that Adam lay with his wife, and he what? He knew her. All the women are like, "He knew her." See they know that verse. They're like, "He knew her. There it is." See, they want to be known. What are your hopes, your dreams, your fears, your past, your present, your future? It's all about exploring the woman.

Now some of you guys are here saying, "I don't know if I ever wanna get married. I get bored with one woman. I want to date, play the field." See, that's the lie that our culture tells you. See, men are taught in this culture to conquer, but never explore. Sleep with this woman. Date this woman. Live with this woman. Never really get to know any of 'em. And some of you say, "Well, I do that because I get bored with one woman." She changes every day, every day. You don't need ten women. You just need one woman and ten days and that's all you need.

[Applause]

They're different every day. How many of you men are married and you've tried to reduce your wife to a formula like, "Okay. If we eat turkey pot pie and I shut up, we're happy." That only worked on Monday. Tuesday, you're gonna get cussed out for that. "She's changing, man." And God intentionally made her that way because men like to explore and the woman is always changing. She's growing. She's learning. She's being transformed. She's being renewed. More of her heart and her soul and the image of God is coming out as she grows in her relationship with Jesus.

So one of the ways you can defend or marriage – and I give this to you brothers – explore your wife. Don't just land on the beach, man. Have the courage to be an explorer, to be the kinda man who is loving and trustworthy and faithful, who draws your wife out. Because what oftentimes happens I find in marriages that suffer adultery is if it's the woman who commits adultery, it is often because her husband doesn't really care to her explore her. He doesn't really know her. Yet, another man comes along and compliments her, asks questions, is intrigued by her, is sort of interested in her, curious about her, and all of a sudden, emotionally they're going to a place they should not, a place that the husband should have already been going.

Or in the reverse, it's the wife who doesn't encourage her husband. Alright? So many men really are the product of the level of encouragement they get from their wife. Men don't wanna tell you that. But if the wife encourages and supports, then men rise to the occasion. And if a man doesn't get that from his wife, then other women come along and compliment him and attend to his emotional insecurity, and then all of a sudden emotionally, they're going to a place they shouldn't.

Best thing you could do in a marriage is draw one another out, love one another, forgive one another, walk together, encourage one another, explore one another, get to know one another. And the reason sometimes that doesn't happen in marriage is because we're sinners and we're afraid. "If my spouse really gets to know me, they're not gonna love me. There's some things I've done that are very sinful. There's some things I think and feel that are very sinful." And you know what? That's true.

I always do this when I officiate a marriage. I have the husband and wife in the ceremony face one another, holding hands, looking sort of idyllic. And then I say to them, and the congregation that's gathered, I say, "Now this marriage is gonna be wonderful. There's only two problems in this marriage. The man and the woman. Other than that, everything is great in this marriage." Because he and she are both sinners and they're going to sin against one another. And sin leads to what? Death. Death of trust, intimacy, joy, oneness, unity, death of the marriage.

You're going to sin against one another. But the good news is, if you understand the person and work of Jesus, sin does not need to lead to death, sin instead can lead to Jesus who already died for sin. You don't need to kill each other or the marriage. You don't need to punish one another with shame or harshness or coldness or meanness or distance or cruelty or adultery. You can forgive one another as God and Jesus has forgiven you.

You don't need to be bitter against one another, because God, though we've sinned against him, he has chosen in his love and grace to forgive us. He's not bitter against you. Then we can practice the gospel of Jesus. We can forgive our spouse. We could say, "What you said or did was wrong, but Jesus died for that. He forgives you. I forgive you, too." And then Jesus takes the sin out of the marriage so that the husband and wife can be reconciled and close and intimate and have that lifelong journey exploring and knowing one another and maturing in their relationship with Jesus.

Those who don't do those things, they're not defending their marriage. They're not doing any sword work. They may say, "Well, we got married and we bought a house and we go on vacation together." Well, great. But that's trowel work. Where's the sword work? Where's the love, intimacy, knowledge, trust, faith, spiritual development and cultivation of one another in such a way that there is not a desire or a need to go outside of the marriage for emotional or physical fulfillment because the marriage is satisfactory?

And I tell you what friends. If you are here and you don't know Jesus, you have no way to deal with sin. And it's going to destroy relationships and joy and ultimately it leads to eternal death. I met my wife when I was 17. I married her when I was 21. I'm now 36. And assure you that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way to build a marriage. There is nothing else that can deal with sin.

And this last week, my wife and I had a great time outta town a couple days together. I can honestly say in the last year, I've gotten to know her in a way and to a depth I've never known her, and I know her well. We've been together since high school. High school sweethearts. But there's parts of

her soul and her mind and her spiritual gifts and the image of God that she bears and the things that she's learning and how God is shaping her that are whole new areas of her heart and her soul and her mind that I just am absolutely enjoying exploring and getting to know her in those ways. Defending, defending, defending.

And so oftentimes couples, they don't really invest like they should. I talked to one couple recently. There was an adultery in their relationship. I said, "What are you doing?" They said, "Well, we're gonna go on a vacation together and get some time together." I said, "Yeah. Wouldn't it have been great to get a vacation before the adultery? Wouldn't it have been great to have date night before the adultery? Wouldn't it have been great to have Bible study and prayer and drawing one another out and using the gospel to walk together as one before the adultery? All that sort of sword work, protecting, defending, providing?"

How many of you are parents? Transition. How many of you aspire to be parents? Okay, most of you. We're big on kids at Mars Hill. We love kids. We believe children are a blessing. We love little people. I love 'em. I got five kids, adore them. Likewise, spiritually and maritally, in your family, you can't just raise kids. You need to do the trowel work of loving 'em, discipline 'em, feeding 'em, tucking 'em in bed, praying with 'em, reading Scripture, telling 'em about Jesus, encouraging them, finding out who God has made them to be, pulling and drawing that out of them. But then when they're grown up, you also gotta protect 'em.

Let me give a strong word to all the parents, and particularly to the daddies, defend and protect your kids. Alright? About a third of the people in our church as far as we could tell were sexually abused, most of them as children. Most of them not by strangers. Everybody'll say, "Tell your kids not to talk to strangers." That's true. But sometimes the abuser in my experience – much of the time, the abuse comes from not strangers, but the uncle, the coach, the teacher, is who is in a position of authority and is known by the child. Defend, protect. You can't just raise the kid. You gotta protect 'em.

This means, for example, you be careful at whose house you let your kid go to. Do you know the parents? Do you know the kids? Do you know the friends of the kids? If you're sending your 13-year-old daughter to play at her friend's house, do you know that she's got an 18-year-old brother, and all his pothead friends are coming over and they're staying the night, too? Somebody should pull the fire alarm. Load the gun. I mean something has to be done.

I saw recently my seven-year-old son, Zac, he's in coach-pitch little league. He's a little leftie. He's got a great swing. He had practice scheduled one night recently and so I took him to practice. Apparently, I got the e-mail too late that practice had been cancelled. About half of the parents didn't get the e-mail in time, so about half the kids show up, and the coach wasn't there. So I thought, "Well, the kids are here. I'm playing catch with my son." The other kids are like, "Hey, can we play, too?"

I thought, "Okay. I love baseball." So I thought, "Well, I'll pitch batting practice and let the kids who come just hit and field and get some practice in." Well, the next thing I know, a bunch of the parents show up and just drop off their kids. One of the moms showed up, she said, "I gotta do some shopping. Could I come back in an hour?" I said, "I'm not the coach. There's no coach here. I'm just throwing batting practice to the boys." She says, "Well, I gotta – I'll be back in about an hour and a half."

I coulda been just a guy at the part, and they're all leaving me their kids. That's not defending. That's not protecting. That's not the sword work of are they safe. Are they okay? And I'll say this, too, with your daughters, you who get to be fathers of daughters, and it's a great honor to be a father of a daughter. I've got two girls. I love 'em. I talk about 'em all the time.

Go out on daddy dates. The first date should not be some 16-year-old kid with a license. No. He should not be the first date. My three-year-old daughter, we're driving in the car yesterday. She's behind me. She says, "Daddy, I have a question." I said, "Okay. What is it?" She says, "When do we go on our next date?" She's three years old. We go on dates, man. We go to Swanson's Nursery and I put her in the little red flower wagon and pull her around to see the flowers, and we feed the fish in the coy pond, and have lunch. We go to the coffee shop and she drinks tea. And we go to art galleries, go for walks in the park. She also loves to go to the space needle for dinner. She's pretty high maintenance for three. We do that, too.

And I buy her new dresses and new shoes and we do daddy dates and I escort her on my arm and open the door because I don't want the first time she hears, "Well, you look beautiful," to be some high school kid. I don't want the first time she is asked, "Would you like to go on a date with me?" to be from some high school kid. I've beaten that sucker to the punch by a decade. He has no shot. He has no shot.

And I told my nine-year-old daughter she's beautiful, natural highlights, smart as a whip. She's just a really cool – I just adore her. She's the one who's leaving me daddy love notes in my Bible and in my jeep and in my office. I mean usually 9:00, I get up to preach and I'll open it up and I'll just (Sniff) 'cause I got a love note in there from my nine-year-old daughter. She sneaks 'em in there to make me cry at the 9:00. I mean she's unbelievable.

And I told her, I said, "Boy, I mean when you get a little bit older and a guy wants to take you, I mean it's gonna be GPS on the car and cell phone in the purse and mace in the hand and your two bothers covert operations tailing you. I mean it's gonna be that way."

[Applause]

And deep down, every young woman wants to know, "My daddy loves me, adores me. He protects me. He's looking out for me. He's keeping me safe. He's not gonna let some boy just come and take me, 'cause I'm his little girl and he adores me. And the only way any guy is ever gonna get access to me is if he's a great guy and he can get through my father and my brothers and firearms and the background check and the polygraph and all these other things," that I would just strongly encourage.

This also includes defending the masculine dignity of your sons, right? I mean we live in a culture where your sons are going to be inclined toward

masculinity. Do so. And I would say this. How many of you really let your sons play with swords. Not real ones, plastic or wood? Do you? Do you now – how many of you here today say, “No. I don’t want my son to be mean.” Sure you do. Sure you do. You want him to mean to bad guys.

So here’s what I’m saying. Your sons should be sword fighting, your little boys. They should be. And if you don’t let them, they will sword fight anyways. They will turn something into a sword. They will. You’ll give them a corn dog, they’ll be like – they’re still whacking each other with it. It doesn’t matter. It’s a corn sword. Just that’s the way it is. That’s ‘cause they’re image bearers of God. There’s a lotta stories of sword fighting in the Old Testament.

Nehemiah 4 gives ‘em a sword. Give your boys a sword. Now give ‘em a few rules. Part of the discipleship. One, we do not attack innocent civilians. That’s terrorism. We do not do that. We do not do Jihad, we do Jesus. We do not attack innocent civilians.

[Applause]

Okay? So what that means with our plastic swords and our wooden swords at the Driscoll house – I got three little boys, seven, five, and one – you don’t run behind your mom and skewer her while she’s doing the dishes. You don’t do that. Secondly, we don’t attack the women. So the sisters are off limits. And, thirdly, we only defend. We’re not bullies. We don’t pick on little kids. We don’t hurt people. We’re not trying to make trouble, but we defend against bad guys.

So even when my sons are sword-fighting, one of them has to be the bad guy, right? “I’m Judas Iscariot.” They pick a character. “I’ll be Herod.” And like, “Okay.” So then they can wrestle and fight and sword fight with the bad guys. Now my coolest thing – I got a seven-year-old son, a five-year-old son, and my one-year-old son, Gideon, now is into sword fighting. It’s awesome. He’s one year old and he’s got this huge gut and his hair’s always sticking up. And he’s kinda got that walk like a drunken ironworker with a gut and stuff. And he’s got a sword and he’s walking around, “Argh.” So he’s like drunk ironworker sword fighter, walking around the house, and he’s wielding this thing, just trying to o after his brothers, and it’s awesome ‘cause they’re just like Jesus. They are.

Who’s the last guy in the Bible to wield a sword? Jesus. My son’s life verse. Jesus comes back at the end of Revelation with a sword out of his mouth. It’s awesome. People allegorize that. Shame on you. That’s the best verse in the whole Bible. Don’t allegorize that. That’s a great verse. My sons love that verse.

Recently, one of my sons actually drew a picture of Jesus with a sword coming out of his mouth. He’s like, “I love that one.” Me, too. That’s awesome. That’s ultimate fighter Jesus. We love that guy.

Now the way this works practically, too, then you’ll teach your sons not to be bullies, not to pick on people, not to pick on girls, not to hurt little kids, but to defend. I’ll give you an example. I think I’ve told you before. But there was a while back, my seven-year-old son, Zach, who’s a great boy, he lays in his bunk bed at night. He reads the Bible in two or three translations. He’s in first grade. He’s written the catechism for his younger siblings. I mean the kid is a theologian, unbelievable.

He love Jesus. Straight As in school. The teacher says he’s one of the nicest boys she’s ever seen. But there was an occasion a while back that he waylaid a kid. They were playing in the other room or something and I heard this (Makes Noise) (Makes Yelling Noise). Then this kid comes running into his mom, “Zach punched me. Zach punched me,” which is my son, Zach. She looks and she says, “Your son hit my son. What are you gonna do about that?”

I said, “He’s a good boy. I’m sure your son deserved it, but I’ll go double check.” So I go in there – ‘cause Zach is not a violent kid. So I go in there I say, “Buddy, Zach,” I said, “did you hit the kid?” He looks me in the eye – he’s a very honest kid. He said, “Yeah, I punched him.” I said, “Did you punch him? Why’d you punch him?” He said, “He was picking on my little sister, kept shoving her over and hurting her. And I told her if he didn’t stop I was gonna punch him. And he wouldn’t stop, so I punched him.” I said, “Did you punch him hard?” He said, “I punched him as hard as I could.” I said, “Okay.”

So I go back in and I said, “Yeah, it’s true. He punched him.” And the mom says, “What are you gonna do about that?” I said, “I’m gonna buy him ice cream.”

[Applause]

“That’s what I’m gonna do. I’m gonna buy him ice cream. If your big mean kid is gonna pick on his three-year-old sister – we read the Old Testament – something’s gonna have to happen.” That’s how it works, man. So it’s an issue of defending your sons and your daughters, but also defending their femininity and their masculinity.

My seven-year-old son, it is awesome. The other day I came home. My seven-year-old son is sitting there with this three-year-old sister, reading her the Bible. I said, “Okay, guys. It’s time to go.” He puts out his arm and escorts her to the car. Beautiful, man. It’s beautiful. Defend the masculine dignity. Defend the feminine dignity. Defend the safety of the children. Make sure that you don’t just do the trowel work of raising them, but also do the sword work of defending them.

A couple other things I’ll say in closing. My voice is going and I’m running out of time. This is true in the world of business. Maybe God has called you to build a business. Do you have good recordkeeping? Do you have good bookkeeping? Do you know the ways that you may be legally liable? Do you have good human resources to hire the right people? Do you have a good termination policy to get rid of the wrong people? Do you train your

employees? Do you compensate them fairly so they're not ripping you off or playing solitaire all day on their computer to get back at you in spite?

Business is also one thing where I have seen some of my dear friends build a business that's going very well, and then have to defend it legally because now people are coming suing them just trying to get some of their money.

And lastly, in terms of ministry, this is something that we need to be aware of. Mars Hill church is going great. I'm not gonna lie to ya. This thing is going great. I mean I'm totally thrilled. I'm just absolutely glad to be a part of what God is doing. We have been given free real estate. We have more possible free real estate on the table. I don't know if you know this. People don't give away land. Like there's not like a big movement to give away real estate.

People are calling, asking us to consider using their real estate, partnering, taking over. We're growing. Fifteenth fastest-growing church in America. Thousands of people have come to know Jesus in just a few years. People are getting married. Babies are being born. You know what? We're going to multiple campuses. Churches are getting planted. It's wonderful. It's great. People that were sexually abused are getting healed up from that sin. People that were addicted to drugs and alcohol and pornography are overcoming their addictions. Community groups are exploding. Relationships are getting built. It is wonderfully encouraging.

There's just so much trowel work going on. So much is being built. Some of you are working so hard and so faithfully. You're praying. You're serving. You're giving your money. You're pouring your life out. And you know what? God's blessing it, just like in the days of Nehemiah. It is wonderful all that is being built.

But we also must remain ever mindful that Satan is real and sin is real and sinners are real and false teachers are real, and that everything that we're working to build could easily be destroyed. And so we defend our church with prayer. We defend our church with Scripture and truth and the sword that it is. We defend our church by walking with God individually, by walking with God in relationship and community, by walking with God as families and marriages and children.

And furthermore, we defend what God is doing by continuing to pray and to keep our eyes open. The last thing we want at this point is false teachers coming in, trying to take the new Christians and then teach them false doctrine and lead them astray. That would be horrible. Men coming in, knowing that we have so many beautiful women, just seeking to take advantage of women by pretending to be Christian, having really sick ulterior motive. Women coming in who aren't yet willing to repent of a way of life, and are just hoping to find a good man without actually first connecting with Jesus.

People coming in who see that our wives and our husbands have been loved encouraged by their spouse, and so they're wonderful and mature, and then being wrongly attracted to someone who's already been well-loved, which is a lazy shortcut to doing the hard work of starting your own relationship, and instead pursuing the course of adultery. There's so much to be prayerfully and practically defending.

And the Lord Jesus in Matthew 6:18 said, "I will build my church." That is the work of the trowel. And he said, "And the gates of Hell will not prevail against it." That's the work of the sword, that Jesus both builds and defends us, his church, his people. And so we must be vigilant to be on the same mission as Jesus, building our lives and our church and our families and our businesses and our own personal relationship with the living God, and then defending it through prayer and Scripture and tithes and offerings and service, not taking for granted all that God has done.

And I'll tell you what. It is encouraging to me, it is encouraging to me at how much trowel work is getting done. And I would just ask you each to prayerfully consider personally in your own life, what has God called you to pick up the trowel and build. Where has God burdened you to invest your time, your energy, your money, your life? These people literally gave their money and their sweat and the risk of their own life to build a city and to build a church. And so they made the Bible. They're great examples for us all.

Not only that. They were willing to defend it. My question for you to ponder and meditate on this week. Not only must you answer the question, "What has God called me to build, the work of the trowel? How can I now best defend it, the work of the sword?" and to be thinking through the practical ways in your life. Do you need health insurance so that you don't lose everything you've worked hard to gain? Do you need life insurance so that if you die, your spouse and children are okay?

Do you need to think through the issues of false teaching that maybe have come into your life, bad books and teachers that you've let influence you, and to really do a season of investigative study and to come to the truth on some doctrinal matters? Have you allowed some sin to reside in your life and compromise that you really need to repent of because it is the enemy's way of having an opportunity to your heart and your soul and your life?

Is there a shameful secret that you've been keeping from those who are close to you because you don't want to really be known? But until you really are known and confess and keep help, you're typically stuck spiritually. You can't really proceed because you have inflicted upon yourself some kind of injury and you're your own worst enemy at this point?

Here's the good news. The Lord Jesus already knows why he has made you. The Lord Jesus already knows the good works that he's appointed in advance for you to do. The Lord Jesus also knows the sins that you have committed. The Lord Jesus has taken them upon himself and paid the penalty for them at the cross. And the Lord Jesus suffered and died, and then rose to give you new life. And so the Lord Jesus is basically willing at this very moment to embrace you, to love you, to forgive you, to walk with you, to reconcile you to himself, and to help you be reconciled to others so that you can have friendship.

If you're not a Christian, you need to be a Christian. You have no way of defending yourself against Satan and sin and death and Hell. You just don't. But with Jesus, you do. And if you give your life to Jesus tonight and confess your sin to him and ask him to forgive you, your first act of obedience

should be getting out of your seat and taking communion with us as part of God's family, remembering the body that was broken and the blood that was shed through the Lord Jesus Christ to what? To build a new life for us and to defend it against Satan, sin, death, and Hell, so that we might actually have a life, a life that is protected and defended into the eternities.

For those of you who are Christians or become tonight, you're welcome to take communion. Give of your tithes and offerings. Spend time in prayer. I would exhort you to get time this week to meditate on the trowel work and the sword work that God has called you to. And then we'll spend some time singing and celebrating and thanking the Lord Jesus because he is altogether good. He is altogether good. And he wants to do a lot of work on you. He wants to do a lot of work in you. He wants to do a lot of work through you. And his intent is to walk with you and to teach you to protect and defend all the good things that he's going to allow you to build in your life.

I'll go ahead and pray.

Father, we you as always for Scripture. God, we confess together that we love Scripture, that we believe Scripture, that we trust Scripture, that we receive it as nothing less than your Word and the means by which you've chosen to reveal yourself to us. I pray, God, that we would not be people who fail to pick up the sword of Scripture, that as a result, we would not be tossed around by the latest wind of doctrine, that the enemy would not be able to accuse us and condemn us and give us lies, because we would know the truth, and that the truth would set us free. And as Jesus said, your Word is truth.

God, pray that you would give us a heart that would hate sin and love you, a heart that would not only seek to work very hard to build a life and a marriage and a ministry or whatever else, a business that you've called us to, but that you would open our eyes, and through your Holy Spirit, that you would give us an opportunity to see the areas where our marriage, our life, our spirituality, our finances, our children, our ministry, our business is vulnerable to destruction, that what we have labored so hard to build could be undone in just a few short minutes. And, God, may we do the hard work of always being vigilant and being prepared to defend the people and things that you've called us to love well. Jesus, thank you for your trowel work in our life working on us. And thank you for your sword work defending us and giving us a victory from Satan and sin and death and Hell.

As we take communion, give of our tithes and offerings, and sing and celebrate, we do so knowing that you are alive and well, that you are a defender, a protector, provider, and we love you so much. And we ask these things in your good name, amen.