



RISE UP!

NEH. 2:18

WHAT'S INSIDE

Introduction	1
Our Mission & Vision	2
Rush Creek Defining Moments	3
Our Challenge	6
Our Goals	7
Our Strategies	8
Strengthen Our Faith	9
Strengthen Our Impact	10
Strengthen Our Stability	11
Our Response	13
Devotionals	15
Schedule	23
FAQs	24
Sermon Notes & Discussion Questions	27

Since the day it was started thirty-eight years ago, Rush Creek has been faithfully helping people far from God become contagious followers of Jesus. This Mission fuels our Vision of being FORERUNNERS of the faith UNITED to help people FIND and FOLLOW Jesus. A commitment to this Mission is something we have always and will always take seriously.

The events over the last couple of years have all but torn our nation apart and churches all over the country are struggling and are in disarray. But remember, when we see obstacles, God see opportunity. This season may be an opportunity to see tragedy turned into triumph for the glory of God.

We believe God is now calling us to us to respond to our biggest challenge yet. This is something that will take ALL of us - 100% engagement - to fulfill. We are calling this next season at Rush Creek RISE UP!

Over the next 24 months, we are praying for everyone who calls Rush Creek home to have a life-altering encounter with God that unleashes a new level of surrender, faith, service, and generosity. Can you imagine what God could do in and through those willing to trust faithfully, surrender fully, and obey completely to what He calls us to do?

When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were still in ruins, he challenged the people to gain strength from the Lord; to RISE UP and do a great work. Rush Creek, it's our time to gain strength from the Lord. RISE UP and do this great work for the glory of our great God and the good of all who will trust Him. Let's Rise Up!



Marty Collier

Lead Pastor

INTRODUCTION



RISE UP!

It's time for God's people to rise up and claim their bright future.

“AND I TOLD THEM OF THE HAND OF MY GOD THAT HAD BEEN UPON ME FOR GOOD, AND ALSO OF THE WORDS THAT THE KING HAD SPOKEN TO ME. AND THEY SAID,

“LET US
**RISE UP
AND BUILD.**”

SO THEY STRENGTHENED THEIR HANDS
FOR THE GOOD WORK.”

—NEHEMIAH 2:18

After Nebuchadnezzar sacked the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., its walls and gates laid in ruin for over 140 years. When Nehemiah, cupbearer to the king of Persia, found out about it, he was heartbroken. God raised him up to challenge His people to set about restoring what had been devastated. They responded faithfully and rebuilt the walls in 52 days.

Recent events have impacted churches in ways not seen in decades—or longer. We now have an unprecedented opportunity to pivot and come out of this stronger and more focused than ever before.

RISE UP is an opportunity for God's people to rise up, take strength from Him, and forge into the future with clarity and confidence.



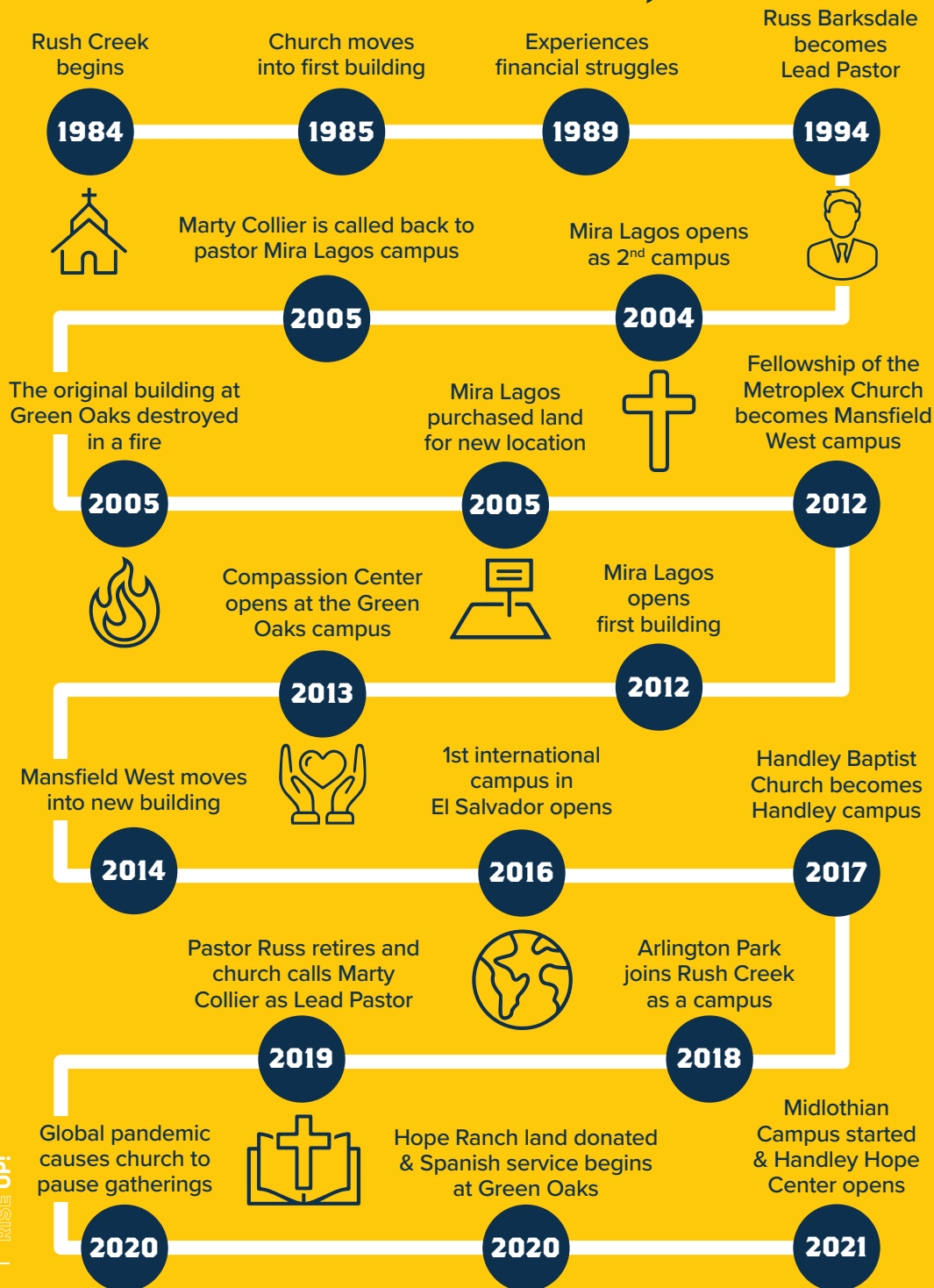
OUR MISSION

RUSH CREEK CHURCH EXISTS TO HELP PEOPLE FAR FROM GOD BECOME CONTAGIOUS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

OUR VISION

WE ARE **FORERUNNERS** OF THE **FAITH**, **UNITED** TO HELP PEOPLE **FIND** AND **FOLLOW** JESUS.

RUSH CREEK DEFINING MOMENTS



GENEROSITY THROUGH THE DOLLAR CLUB



- More than \$100,000 given YTD
- 35 families nominated
- Blessed several families with rental assistance
- Provided a visually impaired senior adult with voice activated reading glasses
- Rush Creek family donated a car to a family in need
- A Rush Creek partner who is a mechanic made repairs on recipients' truck
- Provided weekend vacations for stressed families
- Gave community partners financial blessings
- Provided financial help for a family's sons' funeral expense
- Provided a special computer for a visually challenged girl



Michael and I began going to church together in 2001. Prior to that we did not attend anywhere or have any real spiritual connection together as a couple. I was a recovering alcoholic and drug addict, so I did have a strong spiritual connection through a 12-step program - but not the love of Christ that I know now. As a couple, we were doing our own thing and honestly struggling.

After we started attending Rush Creek, something felt right. We really enjoyed the messages, and both started growing. Our daughter liked the children's area and made a few friends. After attending a membership class, we learned that we could continue as "Regular Attenders" with no obligation, but if we wanted to be partners at Rush Creek (Fellowship of the Metroplex at the time), we needed to commit to attend a small group, serve in some form of ministry, and tithe. I had never heard of tithing but when I found out it was 10% of my income I freaked out! I had a more difficult time with the money part than Michael because I am a planner, while Michael tends to believe things will just work out. I had also grown up poor, so having money, even a little, was my security. So, we prayed - a lot. We joined a life group, started serving, and continued praying about the money. At this time, we were also unemployed, so our total income from unemployment was \$432 a week. But we kept praying and decided that we could start small. Somehow 5% felt like something feasible, so we started there. And then we prayed. What surprised me was that it felt good, we didn't miss it, and somehow we did just fine! So, after a couple of months, we went to 6% and then 7%. And we prayed. Around this time, we both found employment again and were receiving steady income, so we continued to increase our tithe until we got to 10%. Right about when we started feeling accomplished in this area, we had a discussion in small group about giving "gross not net." I will never forget it. If the abundance from the Lord came before taxes, why should we give after? So we prayed again and committed to giving of our gross income. And we have never regretted it.

Over the last 20 years we've walked through very lean times and extremely lucrative times, but God has always provided. God was never after our money; He was after our hearts. He wanted our commitment and faith. He wanted the chance to show us what HE could do when we get out of our own way and let Him. Recently, we came into a little extra income due to a family land sale. So once again, we got out of the way and let God take control. As a result, we were able to partner with Rush Creek to see a portion of these funds go to both our El Salvador campus and Hope Ranch. We are humbled and grateful to get to be a small part of God's Kingdom work.

—MICHAEL & DAR MURPHY

OUR CHALLENGE

**WE BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO
RISE UP AND STEP BOLDLY
INTO THE BRIGHT FUTURE
GOD HAS FOR OUR CHURCH.**

To do that, it's going to take **ALL** of us – **EACH** of us to have a life-altering encounter with God. Pray the people of Rush Creek will **RISE UP** and take our surrender, commitment, faith, and generosity to a whole new level.

Can you imagine how the gospel could be advanced and our church strengthened if each one of us made extraordinary decisions to partner with our extraordinary God?

God wants "to do above and beyond all that we ask or think." He wants to do that in your life, and in our church.

IT'S OUR TIME TO GAIN STRENGTH
FROM THE LORD.
**RISE UP AND DO THIS GREAT WORK
FOR THE GLORY OF OUR GREAT GOD
AND THE GOOD OF ALL WHO WILL
TRUST HIM.**



OUR GOALS

PRIMARY GOAL 100% ENGAGEMENT

We challenge everyone who calls Rush Creek home to take their relationship with Jesus to the next level of surrender, commitment, faith, and generosity. It will take each of us. It will take all of us.

SECONDARY GOAL

\$27 Million committed for 2023 & 2024

This will be a two-year commitment of budget giving.



RISE UP: STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH

\$17.7 Million for disciple-making & ongoing ministries
Praying for 25% increase in leaders to Rise up in Faith



RISE UP: STRENGTHEN OUR IMPACT

\$4.3 Million for gospel sharing and mission partners
Praying for 25% increase of partners serving on mission



RISE UP: STRENGTHEN OUR STABILITY

\$5 Million by updating and renovating campus facilities and paying down current debt
This includes the purchase of land for our Midlothian campus

OUR STRATEGIES

A STRATEGY IS PART OF A PLAN TO REACH A GOAL OR OBJECTIVE.

WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THREE STRATEGIES THAT WILL HELP US ACHIEVE WHAT GOD HAS LAID ON OUR HEARTS TO DO.





RISE UP! STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH

\$17.7 Million

25% increase for disciple-making & ongoing ministries

The backbone of any church is its ongoing ministries and the people who serve and lead them. From taking loving care of the babies in our nursery, to helping our children and teens learn to cope in a crazy world, to strengthening marriages and helping parents with their high calling, we desire to increase our commitment to making strong, healthy Forerunners who are growing in their faith.

To do this we need to recruit, train, and empower 25% more servant leaders and raise the level of our generosity investment.



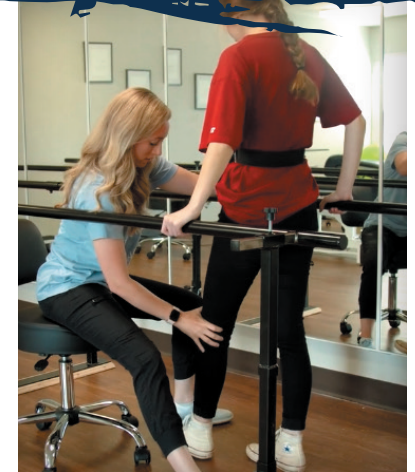
RISE UP! STRENGTHEN OUR IMPACT

\$4.3 Million for gospel sharing and mission partners

25% increase of partners serving on mission

When Jesus laid out His Great Commission, the first word was “GO.” Go into all the world – not just here, but also to our state, our nation, and our world.

Our desire would be to greatly reduce the cost of mission trips and increase global partnerships to take the Gospel to the nations. We would also like to begin a bible translation project for a people group that does not have the Bible in their native language.





RISE UP!
STRENGTHEN OUR STABILITY
 \$5 Million

We desire to increase our stability by updating and renovating some campus facilities to bring them up-to-date electronically and make them more appealing in today's culture.

Although we believe debt is a tool that has to be used wisely and carefully, we want to decrease the balance in order to free up future opportunities for ministry.

We have the opportunity to secure land for a future building for our Midlothian Campus. The family who is selling the property is excited to offer us an incredible deal at almost half the market value because it will be used to glorify Jesus.



Three years ago, I changed jobs after moving into a new home. Four weeks in my new position, I was unexpectedly let go. Crushed and feeling very lost, I spent a few days crying to the Lord since I had no

idea what I was going to do in a new home with no job. My family helped where they could, but it was my student ministry family that pulled through to help me make it for a few months. They said, "You're family and family comes first." God blessed me with that money and shortly after blessed me with my current job. I was then able to do the same for another student ministry family who had fallen on hard times financially. So I was blessed and then was able to bless another leader in the same way. At Rush Creek, the leaders in our student ministry are family, the family God hand-picked, and I wouldn't trade them for anything. Family first!

—LINDSAY TRAMMELL



When we announced that Clayton and I were doing IVF last year, we were overwhelmed in the best way at how many people wanted to encourage and support us through our journey. Our community used

their gifts to help raise support for us and we were able to do two cycles so far and are getting ready for a 3rd one after a miscarriage and failed cycle. Because of our community, we have been able to walk through the highest joy as well as the lowest of lows. Knowing that we're not alone means the world to us.

—HEATHER AKER

OUR RESPONSE

PRAY PERSISTENTLY

Pray that God will work in the hearts of His people and that we will listen with the intent to obey.
Plan to be a part of our Prayer Vigil

COMMIT FULLY

Help reach the Primary Goal of 100% engagement by putting your 'yes' on the altar and encouraging others to do the same.

CELEBRATE LOUDLY

God is going to do amazing things in your life during this season. Share openly and enthusiastically with those around you.

LIVE & GIVE GENEROUSLY

Live and give in a way that stretches you to take your faith to a new level of generosity with your time and money.



RISE UP!

ROLLING OUR GIVING INTO ONE

You may have been a part of church campaigns in the past that asked you to give a second gift 'above and beyond' your usual gifts to make special initiatives like new buildings and new ministries possible.

Normally, you gave that gift to the 'Building Fund' or "Mission Offering" and you also continued to give offerings to the 'General Fund.' The RISE UP! initiative is different.

We believe that it's all ONE MISSION that we're on together. So as a church, we've decided for the next two years it's going to be one fund to which we give generously at Rush Creek Church. This is not a 'special campaign.' It is all ONE fund.

The RISE UP! initiative will last for two years. In those two years, every gift that is given to Rush Creek Church will go to the three strategies we've identified. We've included a sample commitment card so you can begin to pray about your engagement in God's vision for our church through the RISE UP! initiative. Please spend some time with the Lord and follow His leading as you wrestle with how He desires to grow your generosity. We will provide you with a new hard copy on Commitment Sunday.

I will *continue* to serve in I will *begin* to serve in

AREA OF MINISTRY

\$

What I/We normally give in a year
**Check your current giving at rushcreek.org/give*

+

\$

My/Our expanded annual (one year)
generosity for Rise Up!

=

\$

x 2 years =

\$

Gifts from My / Our Stored Resources +

\$



MY/OUR TWO-YEAR
RISE UP! COMMITMENT

\$

QUESTIONS ABOUT GIVING? CONTACT [GIVING@RUSHCREEK.ORG](mailto:giving@rushcreek.org)

PERSONAL DEVOTIONALS

These devotions have been crafted to challenge and help you carefully consider your influence, lifestyle, generosity, and legacy. We're praying this will be a time of deep reflection and spiritually-stretching growth. Some of the questions may be easy for you to answer; others more difficult. Take the time to pause, reflect and listen for a fresh whisper of the Spirit.

As you begin these devotions, think about Ephesians 3:20-21:
"Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

God's promise is that despite the challenge, despite the setbacks, despite the struggle, He is always able to do above and beyond anything we can ask or think. Churches stumble because they don't ask big enough of our Big God.

The New Testament reminds us over and over again that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is resident in each of us. We don't innately have the power; it is in us because Christ is in us.

And for what purpose? That His glory would be manifested. When you look back over the history of the church universal, you see the power of God as His gospel made its way over geographical barriers, religious barriers, cultural barriers—all for His glory. When you look over the brief history of our church, you see the power of God as He overcame barrier after barrier—to His glory and praise.

His glory is to be declared and displayed to every generation until He returns for us. When we are about His glory, our commitment and generosity increases.

No matter where you are on your journey of spiritual growth with God, we absolutely believe God has more in store for you. The most life-transforming, influential, and engaging days of your life are still ahead!

WEEK 1 OUR INFLUENCE

READ EPHESIANS 2:4-10 (CSB)

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! He also raised us up with him and seated us with Him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

REFLECT ON THE SCRIPTURE

1. Who has had the most impact on my life in the area of generosity?
(This could be a spouse, a teacher, a church leader, someone in your Group, a family member, a friend, or a public figure.)
2. Do I believe that my life choices can influence others? How have I seen it happen, either for the positive or for the negative?
3. How might I be more strategic and intentional about how I influence others to look more like Christ?

WEEK 2 OUR LIFESTYLE

READ COLOSSIANS 2:6-10 (CSB)

So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him, being rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude. Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ. For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ, and you have been filled by Him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

1. Is there anything in my lifestyle that is still dominated by my sinful desires?
2. Are there parts of the "hollow and deceptive philosophy" of this world that I feel I have fostered in my heart and lifestyle? (materialism, power, financial security, etc.)
3. Does God have my schedule? If not, what part of my schedule?
4. Jesus sacrificed everything for me. Do I have a sacrificial outlook on how I spend my time and money? Am I serving my church anywhere? If not, why not?

WEEK 3 OUR GENEROSITY

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:10-15 (CSB)

Now the one who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will also provide and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for all generosity, which produces thanksgiving to God through us. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the proof provided by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedient confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone. And as they pray on your behalf, they will have deep affection for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

1. What giving experience has caused me to become closer to God?
2. Am I giving in a way that still changes me, or has it become comfortable and routine?
3. If I were to list the reasons why I give financially, what would those currently be? Has my view of why I give changed over the years?
4. Have I shared my giving story with others? Could my story be an inspiration to help others on their journey? How might God use my strengths and my struggles in this area for His glory?

SCRIPTURE REVEALS DIFFERENT KINDS OF GIVERS:**AN INITIAL GIVER** 2 Corinthians 8:7-15

This type of giver is someone who decides to give for the first time as a response to God. This person is choosing to give and trust God and the leaders of the Church with their gift.

A CONSISTENT GIVER 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

This type of giver is someone who decides to give something on a consistent basis. This often requires planning, and sometimes might be a reason to set up a recurring gift online, or to become disciplined with giving through regular checks.

AN INTENTIONAL GIVER Luke 14:28-35

This person is beginning to think about their giving in relation to their other financial priorities. For example, they begin asking questions like, “Why am I giving more to my cell phone bill than I’m giving to God? Should I be giving to God more than I give for my mortgage each month?” This giver starts to make their giving an intentional choice that reflects their priorities in relation to other things they spend money on.

A SURRENDERED GIVER Colossians 1:15-20

This type of giver begins to ask the question, “Am I giving in a way that changes me? Am I giving in a way that causes my lifestyle to be different to reflect the transformation Jesus is making in me?” A Surrendered Giver’s commitment to giving actually governs the rest of their lifestyle. A Surrendered Giver has a giving commitment that is “larger than their current situation” so that they have to adjust the rest of their expenditures to meet that commitment.

A LIFETIME GIVER 1 Timothy 6:6-19

A Lifetime Giver is no longer asking the question, “God, how much are you asking me to give?” A Lifetime Giver is asking the question, “God, how much are You asking me to keep?” Much like a Surrendered Giver makes a commitment that will govern their monthly and annual decisions, a Lifetime Giver makes a lifetime or longer-term giving commitment that governs his/her larger decisions like homes, cars, investments, and the like.

TWO QUESTIONS:

1. Which one best describes you now?

2. Which one best describes the kind of giver you want to be?

WEEK 5

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-19 (CSB)

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all, and of Christ Jesus, who gave a good confession before Pontius Pilate, I charge you to keep this command without fault or failure until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. God will bring this about in His own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.

WEEK 5

REFLECT ON THE VERSE

1. When I think of a person who has made an impact on my life, who is that person and what did they do that made an impact?
2. What am I intentionally doing right now to ensure that my children or others whom I influence around me are learning values of generosity and servanthood?
3. Thus far in my life, on what have I spent most of my time and financial resources?
4. When I look back on my life toward the end, what do I want people to think and say about my commitment to God, my service to my church, and my generosity toward kingdom work?

SCHEDULE

Oct 16 – Rise Up and Remember God’s Faithfulness

Oct 23 – Rise Up and Seek God

Oct 30 – Rise Up and Gain Clarity

Nov 6 – Rise Up and Do the Work

Nov 11 – Prayer Vigil

Nov 13 – Rise Up and Make the Commitment

Dec 4 – Celebrate – The Results of Rise Up Revealed

Dec 11 – The Big Give

Everyone brings stored resource gift and 1st regular gift of their 2-year commitment

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Is RISE UP! just about money?

A: RISE UP! is about the future of our church. It’s about making an impact for Christ in ways that hopefully we’ve not seen before. It includes money, but as Jesus said, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” It’s really about the heart: is my heart totally committed to Christ for what He wants in and for my life? That includes finances, but it also includes the willingness to invest time to serve, to grow spiritually, and to be a part of our mission and gospel sharing opportunities. In other words, RISE UP! is about discipleship.

Q: If I’m not serving or a part of a class or group right now, how can I get plugged in?

A: Great question! Visit rushcreek.org and choose Get Connected to begin your journey.

Q: If we are committing to RISE UP!, how does this change my giving to missions, the general fund, and other special offerings?

A: During this two-year period, every contribution to God through Rush Creek is a contribution to our RISE UP! initiative. This means that everything from our general ministry budget, community events, local and global missions. *(With the exception of Dollar Club & PEN Pal).*

Q: What are you asking me to do?

A: First and foremost, we are asking that you pray and seek God’s leading on what He is asking of you. Prepare your heart to hear Him and then listen to what He says. Spend time in personal reflection with God in this RISE UP! book. Talk with your spouse, family, and others about what this commitment will mean for this next exciting season of your life. We are asking that you make a sacrificial commitment to gospel-centered generosity of time and money—whatever it is that God leads you to do. Follow His leading. Finally, we ask that you be prepared to be amazed by our awesome God. He is going to move in huge ways as we anticipate an unprecedented impact from our collective RISE UP! commitments—something only God can do. Plan to be here for every week of the RISE UP! series and pray about returning your commitment card on Commitment Sunday.

Q: Are there additional ways besides cash that I can give more towards RISE UP!?

A: Be creative as you explore ways you and your family can give towards RISE UP! You might have some stocks, property, or even some stored resources that God has blessed you with and might be calling you to give out of during this time. Please let us know if you need assistance with facilitating gifts of property or stock, and we would be happy to help you with that.

Q: What if I don't have a job right now? What does that mean for my RISE UP! commitment?

A: RISE UP! is about your total, radical, and sacrificial generosity for God and for His church. We believe that God calls us to action in times of hardship just as much as He does in times of abundance, and that looks different for every person. RISE UP! is about a heart change—one that is accomplished by surrendering our lives completely. So that may mean that you are being challenged to sell things, pick up odd jobs, or even to trust God in faith by making a commitment that you don't quite know how to fulfill right now. We would like for everyone to be a part of RISE UP! so that we can all be supporting, loving, encouraging, and praying for one another through this spiritually-transforming season at Rush Creek.

Q: What if I am severely in debt? Am I supposed to give?

A: If you are currently seeking to pay off debt, we commend you for that—and you should continue to do so. We would be happy to help you on that journey and/or recommend a budgeting group and/or resources that might help you. Being in debt, however, does not have to prevent someone from giving. Giving isn't about what God wants FROM you; rather, it's about what God wants FOR you. It is a joy and privilege to give at all times.

Q: What if I have never given to Rush Creek before?

A: RISE UP! is a “one fund” generosity initiative, meaning that it is different from a traditional capital campaign where you are called to not only give regularly to the church's general fund, but also asked to give to a special project or building fund—creating TWO steps for people who aren't yet giving. By doing a “one fund” initiative with RISE UP! we're saying that every dime that is given to Rush Creek over the next two years goes towards RISE UP! You don't need to be a regular giver already in order to participate. If you have never given before, this is your chance to get in the game and commit to the work God is doing. We really hope you will.

Q: What if I am new around here?

A: RISE UP! is about the future of our church. We believe that the local church is one of the most compelling missions to give toward, and we would really love for you to make Rush Creek your home and join us in RISE UP! If you are ready, this is a perfect time for you to put a stake in the ground and make this your church. Find a place to serve. Give generously. Join a group or class. We want you here. Sign up for our next First Step Experience (FSE) class at rushcreek.org. Choose the Get Connected tab and follow the links to register.

RISE UP and Remember

BIBLE: NEHEMIAH 1:1-3

God positions vs. 1-2a

God preserves vs. 2b-3

RISE UP and Remember
NEHEMIAH 1:1-3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

This session is all about recalling God’s faithfulness. Let’s take a few minutes and look back in our personal lives and in our church.

1. “God can be trusted.” How does this statement resonate with you? What emotions does it call forth? What personal experiences or stories does this statement bring to mind?

2. If applicable, what is the “but” for you? “God can be trusted...but...” Share briefly with the group how you came to this place between you and God.

3. Share with the group a time in your life when you received unfortunate and unexpected news. In the midst of it all how did you respond? In your view, where was God in your story of unexpected news?

START: WILL IT FLOAT?

Fill a clear container, deep sink, or bathtub with water. Collect several items around the house that may or may not float (see suggestions below). Ask everyone in the family to guess whether each item will float or sink, then drop each one in the water and find out!

Suggested Items: An unpeeled orange, a peeled orange, an egg, diet soda can, a block of cheese, a ball of aluminum foil, a sock, a tennis ball, a potato, etc.

Next: In the activity, it was surprising to discover which items sank and which items floated. There are lots of reasons why something might rise to the top when placed in water: it might be hollow inside, it may not be very heavy, or it might be built like a boat. There are lots of reasons why. Our church is starting a new series called RISE UP and we believe God is calling us to live generously for Him. Do you know why we can RISE UP and answer His call? Because..."

- ◆ **God is in control** - He has a plan and we get to be a part of it!
- ◆ **God is faithful** - That simply means that we can trust Him to do exactly what He says He will do!

Finish: Together as a family read Ephesians 2:10. Discuss together how amazing it is that God chooses to use people to do His work in the world. Pray that God would give each of you strength to RISE UP, knowing God is in control and that He is faithful!

The RISE UP! initiative isn't just another series our church is working through. While all series are important, what's unique about the RISE UP! series is the opportunity to take our commitment to Jesus to a level we've perhaps never experienced. Our belief in God's faithfulness will be called forth like never before. Our prayer life, family discussions and personal devotion time could possibly reach a greater depth and richness than ever before.

1. What excites you about the RISE UP! initiative? What concerns you?

2. As we begin this prayer journey for RISE UP! what are some struggles you expect to encounter? In addition to prayer, how can our group surround you and help you bear your burdens? (possible answers: not enough time for other things in my life, no extra income to contribute, not sure but I'm doing the best that I can)

3. Embarking on a prayer journey and committing to having intentional conversations around specific topics can seem a bit overwhelming for those of us with full schedules and responsibilities. How might our group hold each other accountable on a regular basis to keep open dialogue with God, our family, and each other during RISE UP!?

RISE UP and Seek God

BIBLE: NEHEMIAH 1:4-11

Responding in Prayer

Recalling His Promises

Requesting His Provisions

RISE UP and Seek God

NEHEMIAH 1:4-11

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

This session can be a powerful discussion about our prayer life. Not everyone feels comfortable enough to be open and transparent, but you might be surprised and rewarded if you engage.

1. How was prayer modeled for you growing up? Who modeled it best? Worst?

2. There are many types of prayer that are discussed in Christianity (intercessory, healing, repentance, protection). Which type of prayer do you use most?

3. In your view, why are so many people intimidated by prayer?

These next questions are intended to probe our thinking about the sermon and our understanding of prayer. Make sure you get signed up for the Prayer Vigil.

1. Upon hearing about the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah's first response was prayer. How can this be difficult for us? What does the twenty-first century have that could not be matched by a bronze-age agrarian world?

2. Describe your process for praying for important matters.

3. How might Nehemiah's story impact your prayer process?

ACTIVITY

1. Assign group/class member to group of 2-3.
2. Groups will spend time praying over their walk with God, family, RISE UP series, God's favor on our church.
3. Call everyone back together after 10-15 minutes (depends on group).

FAMILY FAITH TALK

WEEK 2

START: P.R.A.Y. TOGETHER!

Prepare for this prayer activity by placing a card with the word "Praise" on an empty chair in your house. Get a piece of paper, poster board, or marker board and write the word "Request" at the top. Place a card on a trash can with the word "Admit" written on it. Finally, place a card on a Bible with the word "Yield" written on it.

Lead your family to practice four components of prayer using the letters P.R.A.Y.

- ◆ **P stands for praise.** Use the empty chair to encourage your family to imagine God sitting in the chair (He's everywhere, so He is definitely in the chair!). Spend a few minutes taking turns telling God why He is great, why you love Him, and all the reasons you worship Him as a family.
- ◆ **R stands for request.** Use the paper, poster, or marker board to write down requests for God's help. In what ways do you need God to work in your lives, in your friend's lives, in your community, or in the world? Write down your requests to God here and put it up somewhere in the house where everyone can see it.
- ◆ **A stands for admit.** An important part of prayer is confessing your sins to God. Show your family the trash can and explain that when we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive our sins and completely throw them away! Take a moment to confess your sins to each other. If you are more comfortable, you may choose to have your family write your sins on slips of paper and throw them in the trash can.
- ◆ **Y stands for yield.** Show your family the Bible with the yield card on it. Tell them it's important to declare in prayer that your family will choose to obey God's Word and live for God. His ways are better than our ways and so we must choose to constantly give up what we want for what He wants. Voice a prayer for your family about yielding to God's plan for your family.

Finish: Read God's promise about prayer in Jeremiah 29:12. Leave the P.R.A.Y. cards up all week and challenge each other to continue practicing praising, requesting, admitting, and yielding in prayer.

RISE UP and Gain Clarity

BIBLE: NEHEMIAH 2:1-16

We need to be clear about the Challenges. vs.1-9

We need to be clear about the Objectives. vs.11-16

Strengthen our Faith

Strengthen our Impact

Strengthen our Stability

RISE UP and Gain Clarity

NEHEMIAH 2:1-16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

To start the discussion this week, let's focus on things that excite us about our church.

1. What stood out to you about the sermon this week?

2. What is exciting to you about what RISE UP! can be for our church?

ACTIVITY

Use your smartphone to find a picture online that represents God's vision for His Kingdom (ex. children, serving the poor, fellowship, prayer, worship) and explain why.

Our personal life and faith journey is largely responsible for how we envision God's Kingdom. Many of us have different images and that's okay! But what about God's vision for our church?

1. Share with the group 1-2 events or memories from our church's past that you consider evidence of God at work. What excited you about that memory? What was the product or outcome of that event or memory?

START: BLIND SPOT ACTIVITY

Take a blank piece of paper and draw an X in the center. Next, draw a dot on the right side of the paper about the size of a small button. One at a time, challenge your family to try to make the dot disappear by putting one hand over their left eye, staring at the X with their right eye, holding up the paper, and moving it back and forth. They should discover a blind spot where the dot completely vanishes from sight.

Next: Explain to your family that no one can see perfectly, and we all have blind spots. Some can't see things up close, some can't see things far away, and some people can't see at all. Even if you're eyes are really strong, there are some things no one can see without help. Scientists use microscopes to see tiny cells and astronomers use telescopes to see things far out in space.

Finish: Say, "Right now our church needs God's help to see what He's doing in the world and join Him in the work. If we are going to RISE UP, we must gain God's vision for our friends, neighbors, community, and the world. He loves people so much and wants to use us to reach them! Let's pray together for God to help us see like He sees."

2. Nehemiah became laser-focused on restoring the walls and gates once he heard they were in ruin. In your experience, why do people quit when they experience adversity? What could we learn from Nehemiah when it comes to adversity?

3. Describe a time in your past when you experienced adversity and struggled to keep moving forward. What were the circumstances? What ultimately helped you move forward? What didn't?

4. God is calling our church to RISE UP! What adversity are you and your family experiencing as you pray and discuss your participation? What do you believe is the source of the adversity? What is your path forward? How can we pray for you?

5. Just as God resourced Nehemiah fully in order to rebuild the wall, we believe God will resource our church to accomplish His vision. At this point, what role will you play at our church in accomplishing the vision?

RISE UP and Do The Work

BIBLE: NEHEMIAH 2:17-6:16

Strengthen our Faith

Strengthen our Impact

Strengthen our Stability

Rise Up and Do the Work.

What will it take?

Determined Hearts.

Divine Help.

RISE UP and Do The Work

NEHEMIAH 2:17-6:16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

ACTIVITY

1. Pair up in groups of 3
2. One person from each group be the scribe
3. Write down the key elements of Nehemiah's story
4. Each group share their version of the story.

The questions below seek to engage us in a discussion of the three strategies of RISE UP!

1. Which of the three strategies of RISE UP! intrigued you most? Why? Acknowledging the church has made this a priority, what do you hope we can accomplish through this strategy?

2. Which strategy intrigued you the least? Why?

START: CHECKER CHAMPION

Read the following list of training exercises and ask your family to pick which one would be most helpful for becoming a champion checkers player:

- ◆ Lifting weights every day
- ◆ Running 4 miles once a week
- ◆ Learning dance routines on TikTok
- ◆ Practicing funny faces in the mirror
- ◆ Learning and practicing strategies for winning checkers

Next: Say, “Obviously, learning checkers strategies is the most helpful way to becoming a checkers champion! Lifting weights, running, dancing, even making funny faces are all good things to do, but none of those activities will actually help you win at checkers. Strategy is important for most games, and it’s important for our church right now, too. God has given us a strategy to build stronger disciples of Jesus, help people in our community, go on mission trips, and more! With God’s direction and our participation, this is a winning strategy!”

Finish: Read together **1 Peter 4:10**. Talk together about how wonderful it is to be a part of God’s winning strategy to accomplish great goals in the world. Discuss how each of you are gifted to serve God in unique ways. Pray for God to reveal how He wants to use each of you to RISE UP and live generously like never before.

3. Remember in Nehemiah’s story when he began to make plans to leave for Jerusalem? He had an urgency, and it didn’t stop until he arrived. Share with the group what your level of urgency is towards the goals of Rise Up. Using a scale from 1-10, with ten being most urgent, rank yourself.

4. Our leadership is asking for 100% participation in Rise Up! Share with the group a few things that could possibly hold you back from fully committing 100%? Perhaps there are others who share the same concerns. Let’s talk about it.

ACTIVITY (10-15 MINUTES)

Have each person use their smartphone and find a picture that represents what they hope God accomplishes through Rush Creek through Rise Up! Once you have found a picture, share it with the group and explain why.

To reach our goals it will take urgency and possibly confronting obstacles that hold us back. Share with the group how you may be feeling as you consider your time, talent, and/or treasure that God may be calling you to commit to through Rise Up!

RISE UP and Make a Commitment

BIBLE: NEHEMIAH 9:38-10:39

Step out and Commit.

Look up and Celebrate.

RISE UP and Make a Commitment NEHEMIAH 9:38-10:39

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

The bulk of discussion time should be spent reflecting on the journey each of us has experienced during the RISE UP! series.

1. If you could go back and counsel 'you' at the beginning of the RISE UP! series, what advice would you give yourself?

2. How has your understanding of Nehemiah deepened your desire to commit more fully to Rise Up?

3. Describe the worship service this week in one word. Why did you choose that word?

4. Share with the group what you believe your role is in RISE UP! and how God moved in your life as you sought His plans for your family.

ACTIVITY (10-15 MINUTES)

End your time together by praying specifically for your church leadership. Pray for protection against Satan and his schemes, division in the body, and indecision in the hearts of the body. Pray for strength of commitment to the cause, peace in God’s direction, and perspective for church staff and their work/life balance. Pray for the Holy Spirit to move in the surrounding communities and prepare the way for our people to accomplish His work through RISE UP!.

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES



RISE UP!

NEH. 2:18