



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Nehemiah Code – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. O.S. Hawkins

Air Date: January 30, 2025

Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and on today's program we're going to hear part two of a fascinating conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and his guest, Dr. O.S. Hawkins, former pastor of the historic First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas and president emeritus of GuideStone Financial Resources.

On our last broadcast, Dr. Hawkins shared about his ministry helping retired pastors through Mission: Dignity, and he introduced his popular series of *Code* books that help believers dive deeper into Scripture. Today he'll take us into the powerful story of Nehemiah, showing us how this ancient tale of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls offers practical wisdom for anyone seeking a fresh start in life.

Now these insights come from Dr. Hawkins's book, *The Nehemiah Code: It's Never Too Late for a New Beginning*. Through the story of Nehemiah, we'll discover timeless principles for starting fresh, whether we're rebuilding relationships, restoring faith, or seeking a new direction in life. Dr. Hawkins will remind us that with God's help, genuine transformation is always possible. And now let's rejoin Dr. James Dobson for part two of this inspiring conversation here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Hawkins, thank you so much for being with us again today. I love the program we did together last time and we've got a lot more to talk about related to your book, *The Nehemiah Code: It's Never Too Late for a New Beginning*. And what I love about this book is that I really love the story of Nehemiah, but I want to take that story back before you start with the book to how we pick up Nehemiah in Babylon. He was a cup-bearer for the king, wasn't he?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: To the King Artaxerxes, yes. And the beautiful thing about Nehemiah, what I like to remind people is, he wasn't a preacher. He wasn't a prophet-

Dr. James Dobson: Wasn't a theologian.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: He was not a theologian. He was a civil servant. He had a civil service job as cup-bearer to Artaxerxes with all the fringe benefits, retirement benefits,

everything. And he left it all to be the rebuild of the broken walls. After the death of King Solomon, as you know, the Kingdom of Israel divided into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. In the northern kingdom, they were ruled by all wicked kings. There wasn't one good king among them. And in 722, the Assyrians took them away into captivity and they never returned. The southern kingdom-

Dr. James Dobson: Did Nebuchadnezzar's army do that?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: No, that was the Assyrians in 722. In 586 then to the southern kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem in a horrible siege, and they destroyed the city, broke the walls down, burned the gates, and they took the brightest Jewish minds they could find back to Babylon.

Dr. James Dobson: Daniel was one of them.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and others. And they took them back to re-educate them. They tried to change their language, they tried to change their literature, all those things you can read about-

Dr. James Dobson: Their diet.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Exactly. In the Book of Daniel. And so after a period, the Persians broke the Babylonian supremacy. A remnant had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls, and they got so discouraged that they quit. And Nehemiah heard a report that Jerusalem was a reproach and the walls were still broken, the gates burned, and he went to the king and begged permission to go back to Jerusalem and he was granted. And Nehemiah went back to Jerusalem, he made a midnight ride on a horse around the walls and he wept over the ruins.

Dr. James Dobson: He did, and he began fasting and praying.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: He fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven, the Bible says. And then he moved and mobilized that remnant was there that for years had left that city dormant, and in 52 days they rebuilt the city. And there's some incredible applications there to how any of us, whoever we are, whatever our circumstance can rebuild our own broken lives. Because as the subtitle of the book says, and the message of Nehemiah is this, it's never too late for a new beginning.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's exactly what he did and began building the wall. And it wasn't that he didn't have opposition. Sanballat, as I recall, was out on the edge of town and he was making fun of him and mocking him-

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Mocking. Said if a fox runs up on it it'll fall down. Sanballat and Tobiah and others. He faced incredible opposition, but he kept focused, he kept going forward. The book is divided into the several sections of what you need to do to

be a rebuild. First of all, you've got to get started right, and that's what Nehemiah did. Rebuilders get started right, they make an honest evaluation of the situation. They identify with the need, they take personal responsibility, and then they move out of their comfort zones. We live today in comfort zones. Some of us don't have anything to do with anybody unless they're in our socioeconomic level or political level or whatever, educational level. So he got started right. Then the second thing he did, he built a team spirit. And that is so vital in rebuilding.

Dr. James Dobson: He was a great organizer, wasn't he?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: He was an incredible organizer. And if I had a pencil in my hand right now, wooden pencil, I could easily break it. But if I put two or three together, it's exponentially more difficult to break. We call that synergy. That's what he did. The Bible says if one can chase 1,000, two can chase 10,000. He understood and recognized that we all need each other in the rebuilding process. So he built this team spirit of those around him. He started with his goal in mind, seized his opportunities and motivated his people to get off a dead center.

One of the most important things he did, he was an example himself. The greatest leadership principle I know in or outside the Bible, and there are millions of leadership books I suppose, but Gideon in Judges 7:7, he got his army down to 300 people, as you remember, and was going out to fight thousands of the Midianite hosts with that little army. And the last thing he said to them, he turned to them in Judges 7:7 and said, "Do as I do." It's the greatest principle of leadership I know because eventually those of us in leadership, the people on our team are going to do what we do. So this was one of the real secrets of Nehemiah. He was there with them. He was putting those stones in with them. He was building. He was up and down the lines showing them appreciation. One of the greatest motivating factors in the rebuilding process is to give people a pat on the back to say they're appreciated. Let them know that they're appreciated. This is what Jesus did. He went around-

Dr. James Dobson: "Do as I do."

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Yeah, and, "Do as I do." This is what Jesus did. He went around affirming people. Affirmation's vitally important.

Dr. James Dobson: A related passage in Scripture related to Nehemiah is found in the Book of Ezra. Then Ezra was a priest, and they got in there, this is a wonderful passage, I think it's in the 10th chapter of Ezra, and Nehemiah had to be close at hand. And they got into the ruins of Jerusalem and came across the scrolls and they began reading them and their eyes were open to their sin. And they were marrying foreign wives and so on. And there was a platform there, and Ezra got up on that platform and began reading the scrolls.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Just read the Word of God.

Dr. James Dobson: And their eyes popped open and they began weeping. If there's a moment in Scripture or one of them that I would most like to have been there, it's to be there when this repentance, this revival broke out through the people and they say, "We sinned against the God of Heaven," and they fell on their faces and Nehemiah was weeping. And that was the beginning of the energy that helped to rebuild the wall, wasn't it?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Exactly. As the Bible says, it is not my word, God said, "Like a hammer that breaks a rock to pieces." And when the Word of God goes forth, not just in Ezra and Nehemiah's day, but in our day, when we get the Word of God into our heart, it makes it a huge difference.

Dr. James Dobson: Don't you wish that Spirit would spring across this country?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: God help us.

Dr. James Dobson: And that people would say, "Oh, I didn't know that was in the Bible. I didn't know what I was doing was that wrong. We have sinned against God. Forgive us, Lord. We repent of our sin."

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Exactly. That's really the motivating factor that I have behind all these *Code* books because every one of them go to the Scripture. Because it's the Bible, it's the Scripture that brings conviction. There's a lost word in our Christian vocabulary, conviction. When Peter stood up and read from Joel and illustrated with some Psalms on the day of Pentecost and preached that great Pentecostal proclamation, you remember what it says? It says their hearts were cut. They fell under deep conviction. And that only comes from the Word of God. Another thing about Nehemiah was how he dealt... I call it rebuilders never cut what they can untie.

Dr. James Dobson: I read that and that didn't ring true to me. I didn't know what you meant by that, but now I do. Explain it.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Well, you were a little boy in Fort Worth and so was I. And in my block over on the east side of Fort Worth, there was an old vacant lot on that block and it was our ball pit. It was like Yankee Stadium to me and my buddies on Crenshaw Street. And we'd play ball up there. And there was one kid that would come to that vacant lot and he had a pair of black canvas high-top tennis shoes. This is back in the '50s when I was a boy. And those shoes would only be laced up halfway up to the top and there'd be several eyelets at the top unlaced because he was so impatient that when he would get a knot in his shoelaces, instead of taking the time to untie them, he'd take his pocket knife out and just cut them off.

And that's the way a lot of people do in relationships. They don't want to take the time and the effort and the energy to untie those knots that get into relationship. So they just come along, and for some people it's easier just to cut

them off. And that's why they go from one relationship to another to another to another. But when you're rebuilding, you never cut what you can untie. Conflict resolution is a vital important of Nehemiah's story because conflict will tear your team apart. It doesn't matter whether it's at church or at home or in business or wherever.

So Nehemiah, there were four things he did to resolve conflicts. And timing was everything. He said, there's a time to back off, there's a time to stand up, there's a time to give in and there's a time to reach out. Some of us don't know when those times are. Some of us, all we do is stand up when we have a conflict and just get in somebody else's face and just move in like a bull in a china... Some of us just all we do is back off and we never even deal with it. There's a time to back off and seek God's counsel, that's what Nehemiah did. But there's also a time to stand up for what's right. And there's a time to give in.

When we were raising our daughters with all those books from Dobson, I discovered early on that I would a lot rather lose a few little insignificant battles that didn't amount to a hill of beans and win the bigger war. So I gave in on some non-essentials that I really didn't want to, but they didn't amount to anything. So there's a time to give in, but there's also a time then to reach out. And if you want to know the beautiful illustration of this, we were all in conflict with God. As you mentioned ago, we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We're all in conflict with God, so this is the story of the gospel.

Christ came to mend the broken relationship. Christ came to reconcile us to God. Christ came to reconcile that conflict resolution. So what did He do and how did He do it? Those four things. He backed off. See Him in Gethsemane's Garden the night before the crucifixion, neath those old olive trees, backed off, prayed, took in so He could give out at Calvary. "If it's possible, Lord, let this pass from me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours." Then secondly, we see Him after backing off standing up, He stood up before Caiaphas. He stood up before Annas. He stood up before Pontius Pilate. Then we see Him giving in. Nobody pushed Him or shoved Him up the Via Dolorosa. He went as a lamb for the slaughter, willingly gave in. And finally on the cross with arms outstretched, we see Him reaching out as though He were saying, "Whosoever will may come." And through Him we can be reconciled to God.

Dr. James Dobson: And the Lord will forgive and embrace, but it requires something on your part. It does require repentance.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

Dr. James Dobson: Hey, tell me that phrase again that I said I didn't understand in the beginning there.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Never cut what you can untie.

Dr. James Dobson: All right and related to the strings-

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Right. Related to conflict resolution. Take the time to untie those broken relationships.

Dr. James Dobson: What's the next point from your book, *The Nehemiah Code*?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Well, we talk about how Nehemiah let go without letting up. The secret to what he did was his ability to delegate and to use other people. He let go without letting up. He was the master of this. He set clear objectives. Some of us are trying to rebuild businesses or churches. Set some clear objectives with specific tasks if you want people to be on your team. Let them know what to do. Pick the right person for the right job. So often we put the right person in the wrong job or the wrong person in the right job. Somewhere there's a job that each of us can do.

Dr. James Dobson: Can you imagine Nehemiah setting out to rebuild a wall?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: What is it, 14, 18 feet thick?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Well, anybody that's been to Jerusalem has seen those stones.

Dr. James Dobson: And they still last today even though they were torn down.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Exactly. Yeah, right.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, he wasn't-

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: There's another principle I call YAC and I got it from John.

Dr. James Dobson: I like that.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: I got it from John.

Dr. James Dobson: I know about this one.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Nehemiah would use this because it's a secret to rebuilding. John Madden was an NFL coach and then color commentator on football games, NFL games.

Dr. James Dobson: One of the best.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: One of the best. He coined an acronym, YAC he called it, yards after contact. And it was the amount of yards that a running back after he was hit initially the first time how he moved forward, didn't crumble on the ground, didn't fall to the ground, how he kept moving forward toward the goal line. And from the

time he was hit to where he went down, that was a new stat called YAC. And this is exactly what Nehemiah did because rebuilders deal with conflict head on. When they get hit, and we're all going to get hit, they don't just crumble or fumble the ball. They keep moving, they keep moving forward, they make some proper adjustments. They keep doing what's right. They rally their troops to greatness.

Dr. James Dobson: I love that YAC, Y-A-C, yards after contact. Every great runner keeps going when he's been hit and he carries sometimes three or four or five people with him and sometimes across the goal line.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: And we're all going to face opposition. If you're not facing opposition from the devil, you're going the same direction he is. So we're going to face opposition, and it's all a matter of how we deal with it.

Dr. James Dobson: Our country is in the midst of conflict right now, and some people have given up, they sit down. And Nehemiah did that to start with. He sat down and thought about it. But he got up and went and built the wall.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: And I think where we are now, we really ought to be doing some of that kind of thinking.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: I agree 100%. That's what *The Nehemiah Code* is about. It sets a pathway to us to rebuild anything.

Dr. James Dobson: What did he eventually do? Did he finish the wall?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: In 52 days the wall was completed. He finished strong. And the way he finished strong actually was that he stayed off the side streets by keeping focus and he stayed off the sidelines by being faithful. And you and I both have seen people that when they're running the last lap of life, fall on the track. And I don't know about you, and I do know about you, but I know about me also, and one thing that I want to do is I want to finish strong. I want to be like Nehemiah, get the job done, finish strong. God's given me a task to do. And that's exactly what I want to be about. There's one of the secrets that I've found in my life came from a question that's actually in *The Jesus Code: 52 Scripture Questions Every Believer Should Answer* in this *Code* series. And it's the question it was asked in Isaiah 50; "Does anyone fear the Lord anymore?" Is there anyone who still fears the Lord?

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, what a verse.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: And you know, Dr. Dobson, if there is a forgotten subject in the church, it's the fear of God. How long has it been since you heard a sermon on the fear of God? How long has it been since you heard somebody teach on the fear of God? It's a

forgotten subject. And the fear of God is not the fear that God is up there and has this big club of retribution, if we say something wrong or do something wrong, He's going to pound us over the head with it that we have to walk on eggshells. It's not the fear that God's going to put His hand on us. The fear of God is the fear that God might take His hand off of us. And if people would just live with that concept everyday-

Dr. James Dobson: Instead of fear, I don't want to edit the Bible, but instead of fear, I think of the word awe.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Well, that's the word for fear in the Bible.

Dr. James Dobson: Is it?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Reverential awe. In fact, in the Book of Acts, it says that the early church was walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and they were multiplied. So they were walking in the fear of the Lord. They were living in this environment of the fear of the Lord that they didn't want to do anything that might cause God to take His hand of blessing off them.

All those Old Testament prophets lived in the fear of God. Noah by fear, moved the ark, Hebrews 11 says. Moses, when he was going into the Promised Land, "What does the Lord require of you," Deuteronomy 10, he asked him, "but to fear Him as you go?" Joshua got to the end of his life in chapter 24, his last words to his people, "Now then, fear of the Lord and serve Him in all faithfulness." The Proverbs woman, 31, we bring her out every Mother's Day, make all the women feel guilty because they can't measure up to her. But the secret of her life's way down in verse 31. A woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. It's all through the gospels.

Dr. James Dobson: It is everywhere throughout Scripture.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: It's all through the Gospels. It's all through the Book of Acts. It's all through the Epistles. "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord," the Bible says. In fact, this is the way that we keep from sin. Proverbs 16:6 tells us that, "By the fear of the Lord, one departs from evil." Do you know there's a supernatural principle there that if you walk in the fear of God, He'll keep you from sin. What about Moses at Sinai when he talks about the fear of the Lord? It's all through the Bible. It'll keep us from sin. That when we're walking in the fear of the Lord, God gives us a supernatural ability to overcome our sinful desires. I'll tell you something else He'll do, He'll give us supernatural wisdom to know the Word of God you're talking about a moment ago. Psalm 25:14 says, "The secrets of the Lord are for those who fear Him. And to them He'll reveal His covenants."

Dr. James Dobson: I heard my dad say many times that and never forget and never doubt that the universe has a boss.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: And He's not a winking, blinking grandfather who gives you everything you ask for, but He calls us to righteousness.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: He calls us to stand for truth.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: And that same God hasn't abdicated throne. His eyes still run to and fro over this whole world to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are fixed on Him.

Dr. James Dobson: That's what worries me about our country because we have forgotten that fear, that awe.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Yeah. No question.

Dr. James Dobson: And it's all through Scriptures. If you read it'll speak to you.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Yeah, no doubt about it. In fact, I would challenge your listeners that in your normal devotional time, every time you come across that concept, fear of God, circle it in your Bible. You'll be shocked how many times it's there. And again, if our listeners today could just understand that the fear of God is not the fear God's going to put His hand of retribution on us, but the fear that He might take His hand of blessing and anointing off of us. And if we'd walk in that environment, it'd make a difference in what we do, what we say, where we go, and all those things of life. And we'd understand as Nehemiah that it's never too late for a new beginning.

Dr. James Dobson: You are preaching still today in many places, aren't you?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: I am. In fact, I just ran some of your friends at Scottsdale Bible the other day. And I preached to Michael Youssef's-

Dr. James Dobson: And Jay Snyder, great friend.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Jay Snyder's a wonderful guy. Just was out at Church of the Apostles in Atlanta with Michael Youssef, I preach at First Baptist Dallas, my old church, still four or five times a year. Dr. Jeffress is so good to have me back. So yeah, but God has enlarged my coast. And I'd encourage people if they want to know more about all the *Code* books or Mission: Dignity to go to oshawkins.com and they can get all the information there.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let me remind people of what they are. You've written *The Joshua Code*, *The Jesus Code*, *The James Code*, *The Daniel Code*, *The Believers Code*, *The*

Christmas Code, and the linkage between all of those and *The Nehemiah Code* is taking a stand for what's right and what God has to say. Put it into your words.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: I'll put it into Joshua's words. In Joshua 1:8, "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. But you shall meditate on it day and night in order that you may do all that is written therein. And then you'll make your way prosperous. Then you'll have good success." So these codes are just about getting us... Not getting us into the Word of God, but getting the Word of God into us.

Dr. James Dobson: One of the great pleasures of what the Lord has allowed me to do here is meeting people like you who come in and I learn from every one of you. And you have been a blessing to me today, and I know to all of our listeners. The title of the book we've been talking about is *The Nehemiah Code: It's Never Too Late for a New Beginning*. Dr. O.S. Hawkins, you took a lot of time to come and be here. Thank you. Let's do it again, can we?

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: I'd love to. Thank you so much.

Dr. James Dobson: God bless you, friend.

Dr. O.S. Hawkins: Thank you, brother.

Roger Marsh: Well, just like Nehemiah's careful work of rebuilding Jerusalem's ancient walls, we too are called to be rebuilders in our own time, whether that means repairing broken relationships, strengthening our communities, or restoring what's been lost in our culture. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and a hope-filled conversation about rebuilding and renewal featuring Dr. Dobson and his special in-studio guest, Dr. O.S. Hawkins.

Now, if you missed any portion of today's broadcast or if you'd like to share it with a friend or loved one, visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And once you're there, you'll find the complete program, both parts one and two, along with information about Dr. O.S. Hawkins's book called *The Nehemiah Code*. And by the way, if you're looking for more practical ways to strengthen your family, we've partnered with the Bible app by YouVersion to bring you free, easy-to-use reading plans that fit your busy schedule. Each plan offers Dr. Dobson's trusted insights on marriage, parenting, and family life delivered right to your phone or tablet. Ready to get started? Well, simply open the Bible app and then search for Dr. James Dobson or JDFI or Family Talk and discover resources that can transform your family one day at a time.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and from all of us here at Family Talk, thanks so much for listening. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.