



From Ruins to Restoration

Part 1

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Awakening America Alliance



This personal devotion or small group study is a combination of insights from an earlier 2020 issue, recent shared experiences, and a 2018 Helper Covenant Connection article. May you be challenged to recognize the rubble that may be hindering the joy of the Lord in your life and ministry. May you also experience the refreshing power of God in the process.

As we moved into this new decade of 2020, we sensed the word “focus” was a directive from the Lord. Not knowing what would lie ahead of us in our lives, churches, and world, we believed God was reminding us to “...fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). Our focus was to be on JESUS!

How could we have known in January, that we would be bombarded physically, emotionally, and spiritually with attempts to draw our gaze away from Christ. In these challenging times, we can easily stumble over seemingly insurmountable obstacles or drown in overwhelming fears. All the while, He is trying to recapture our attention, so we can be reminded to learn from the One who is gentle and humble in heart.

I love how Jesus encapsulated His divine directive—“learn from Me”— with the promise of rest for the weak, weary, and burdened because His “yoke is easy and [His] burden is light” (11:28–30). Essentially, He was saying, “Focus on Me. Be intimately connected or ‘yoked’ with Me. I’ll not only show you how to navigate these difficult days; I’ll renew your strength for the journey.”

However, personal and corporate renewal and revival doesn’t always coincide with our schedule. Like the Old Testament writer, Nehemiah, as we survey the rubble and ruins in our world, our recognition of need must synergize with a willingness to get involved in the process and trust God’s timing for complete restoration.



In Nehemiah's time, the political, social, and spiritual conditions of Jerusalem were in shambles. The walls of the city were in ruins because of the habitual laziness of the people. They were surrounded by rubble. He was not a priest or theologian but a passionate servant of God, called to return and facilitate the rebuilding project. First, he was crying, mourning, and looking sad in the king's presence (1:4; 2:1–2). Then he is scared almost speechless when he went before the king and again when enemy opposition was exposed (2:2, 9–12). Next, he was driven to get the walls built (2–4). Finally, he's furious because the people were mistreating one another in the process (5:6).

How does this relate to us as women, who may only know how to use a hammer and nails to hang pictures or home decorations? Everyone can identify with this narrative of scripture. We are emotional beings who deal with similar struggles. Walls symbolize strength and protection, and in ancient cities, they were the only means of defense. While many have been sheltered in place, our walls may have felt more like prison cells, and we have found ourselves examining the cracked paint, dirty smudges, and broken places.

Jerusalem is symbolic of the city of God—His dwelling place, the center of life for the world. Reconstructing its walls pictured the restoring and renewing of the strength of a life and a nation. Join me in exploring a defining moment which placed Nehemiah in the center of God's restoration process.

RECOGNIZE THE RUINS

The book of Nehemiah begins with a news flash (e-blast or text alert): *“Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire”* (Nehemiah 1:3).

Regardless of how many people say the journey of faith is like skipping effortlessly through La La Land, sometimes our lives can become broken. The good news is Christ-likeness requires brokenness, which comes when we submit our lives and wills to God during trials and adversities, embracing them as a way of fellowshiping with Christ's suffering.

Brokenness is the imagery we see as the writer of Hebrews speaks of Christ, *“During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission”* (Hebrews 5:7). Even the sinless Son of God taught us obedience through the things He suffered (5:8).

We may have survived our COVID-19 exile, but during this time, the Holy Spirit has revealed or exposed trouble with some broken relationships and burned gates where the enemy has gained illegal access to our minds and hearts. Rather than simply accept and live with the disgrace, we need to recognize the ruins and ask for help—first from God, but also from other godly counselors and friends.



ASK FOR HELP

The path to restoration and renewal begins with brokenness, humility, and a recognition of need. When Nehemiah heard about the situation in his homeland, he was moved so deeply that he wept. His concern over the condition of Jerusalem could not be ignored. It consumed him. His name means “Jehovah comforts” or “comforter,” and he came alongside the people of Jerusalem to help rebuild. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is also known as the *paraklete*—the one who comes alongside to help. He is often merely waiting for us to ask. Even in those times when we don’t know how to ask, He will intercede for us (Romans 8:26). Nehemiah asked!

Rather than launching some ill-conceived plan to save the day, Nehemiah waited for God to reveal what his next step should be. He prayed, planned, and prepared. When God finally said, “Now, go and rebuild the city of Jerusalem,” Nehemiah was ready to obey and fulfill the desire God had been cultivating in his heart. In fact, the text records eleven times that Nehemiah engaged in prayer. He knew restoration could not occur without it.

Yes, we’re more than ready to gather once again in our sanctuaries and worship with one another in person. Technology is a blessing, but it can seem so impersonal. A cold, hard computer screen is a poor substitute for a warm, gentle embrace from a close friend or sister in Christ. But, could our divine Carpenter be wanting to do some internal reconstruction through time spent communing with Him in prayer before He gives us the directive to begin the corporate rebuilding project? Don’t merely ask for help. Listen, learn, and engage in the process with the Holy Spirit and others.



W4. Implicit, unwavering trust that His Word will never fail

ENGAGE FELLOWSHIP: Personal or Covenant Group Interaction

Take a few moments to write in your prayer journal or share with two or three other small group members your response to the following:

1. Even Christ came to a point where He fell beneath the weight of the cross, and someone was called alongside to help. Do you sometimes feel you must stay strong for your family and church and to admit brokenness is unthinkable?
2. What would be required for you to feel safe enough to share areas where you are needing some ruins removed and restoration in your life? The life of a family member? In your ministry or church? Could this be the time?

