



FAILURE IS NOT FINAL.
EXILE IS NOT THE END.
GOD NEVER LEAVES
HIS PEOPLE.

THE STORY OF RENEWAL

The city of your forefathers is more than a thousand miles from where you now live. You have never seen it with your own eyes because you were born to a captive people in a foreign land, but you have heard endless accounts of its former beauty, glory, and fame. Now new reports have surfaced: the walls of this once-lovely city are broken down, the gates are burned and the people living there are in distress.¹ Time had not stood still. Time had taken its toll on the people and the city. When God's people returned to the land they had been exiled from, the people and the city were in desperate need of restoration. They would find that the grass was not greener, nor were the circumstances sweeter. There would be challenges, obstacles and opposition from all directions; but they would be home. Home is where the heart is, and it would be where the work began; the work of renewal for both the people and the city.

The book of Nehemiah is a story of Renewal. The central message of the book of Nehemiah is the restoration of Jerusalem as the city of God and the nation of Israel as the covenant people of God. The people of Israel have been exiled in Babylon for seventy years, suffering the consequences of their moral and religious failure. Treated as second class citizens of Babylon they lived as slaves to a foreign power experiencing oppression, unable to worship God freely. As the book opens, one generation has passed away and a new generation that has never seen the Promised Land is free to return home. The story of Nehemiah encourages us that failure is not final. Exile is not the end. God never leaves His people. There is always room for renewal with God.

The Story of Renewal begins with brokenness. The people of Israel are returning to a broken Jerusalem. There are no walls or gates. The altar of God is decimated. The temple is destroyed. The people of Israel arrive in Jerusalem exposed to enemies and without a place to worship. They are in desperate need of renewal. While our circumstances are different than the people of Israel were in those times, we share a similar need for renewal in our life!

In Nehemiah, "there is something for virtually everyone – a general's diary, a governor's report, a civil record, a management handbook and a memoir – all in one short book."² It is filled with suspense, heroism, hope, and a renewing of the covenant between Israel and God. Over the next five weeks, we will discover how we can experience renewal in our own lives. Broken walls and broken hearts can be renewed. Dissipated passion for God can be restored. The book of Nehemiah unpacks five principles that will lead to renewal in your life.

May 2/3	Renewal Through Prayer - Nehemiah 1
May 9/10	Renewal Through New Beginnings - Nehemiah 3-4
May 16/17	Renewal Through Leadership - Nehemiah 5-6
May 23/24	Renewal Through God's Revelation - Nehemiah 8-9
May 30/31	Renewal Through Commitment - Nehemiah 10

¹ *The Jeremiah Study Bible*, Worthy Publishing, 2013, p. 619

² *ESV Study Bible* p. 822