

5-DAY *Devotional Guide*



THINK RENEWAL

Day 1: Seeing the Ruins Honestly

There is something deeply human about wanting to look away from what is broken. When life falls apart, whether it is a relationship, a dream, or a season of faith, the temptation is to minimize the damage or pretend things are not as bad as they seem. But honest renewal always begins with honest seeing.

Nehemiah did not look away. When he heard that Jerusalem's walls were broken and its gates burned, he sat down and wept. He did not rush past the pain. He allowed himself to feel the full weight of what had happened before he ever took a single step toward rebuilding.

There is something freeing about that. You do not have to pretend. You do not have to perform strength you do not have. God is not asking you to act like the ruins are not real. He is asking you to bring them to Him, just as they are.

Whatever is broken in your life right now, you can look at it honestly. Grief is not a lack of faith. It is often the beginning of it. Nehemiah's willingness to see the reality of Jerusalem's condition was the very first step toward everything God was about to do through Him.

You can honor the weight of what has happened without letting it have the final word.

Bible Verse

"Then I said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.'" - Nehemiah 2:17 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question

Is there an area of your life where you have been minimizing the damage rather than honestly acknowledging it before God?

Quote: "Nehemiah didn't minimize the ruins. He allowed himself to see and to grieve and understand the conditions of Jerusalem."

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to see clearly what is broken in my life without fear or pretending. I bring the ruins to You, trusting that You are not overwhelmed by what I am facing.

5-DAY *Devotional Guide*



Day 2: Stop Dwelling, Start Perceiving

It is easy to get stuck in the past. Not because we are weak, but because what we lost mattered. A relationship that shaped us. A version of life we loved. A season of faith that felt so alive. When those things change or disappear, the pull to go back can feel almost magnetic.

But God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, said something surprising to His people who were living in exile. He told them to stop dwelling on the former things. Not because those things did not matter, but because clinging to them could cause them to miss what He was already doing right in front of them.

He was not erasing their history. He was freeing them from the belief that His future work had to look exactly like His past work. That is a subtle but powerful shift. God's faithfulness in the past is real. And His faithfulness in the future will be just as real, even if it looks different than what you expected.

The question He asks is simple and searching: Do you perceive it? Not, do you understand it fully? Not, do you have it all figured out? Just, are you paying attention? Are you open to what He might be doing in this new season?

Today, loosen your grip on what was. Open your hands to what God is already beginning.

Bible Verse

"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." - Isaiah 43:18-19 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question: In what area of your life might your longing for the past be keeping you from perceiving what God is doing right now?

Quote: "God wasn't erasing Israel's history. He was freeing them from believing that his future work had to exactly resemble that past thing."

Prayer: Father, loosen my grip on what used to be and open my eyes to what You are already doing. Help me to trust that Your new work is just as faithful as everything You have done before.

5-DAY *Devotional Guide*



Day 3: Recovery or Renewal

When something breaks, the first prayer that rises up is usually, "God, give it back." Give me back the health I had. Give me back the relationship that fell apart. Give me back the version of life that made sense. That is recovery, and it is a completely understandable response to loss.

But there is a deeper prayer available to you. It is the prayer of renewal. And renewal asks a different question entirely.

Recovery asks, how do I get back what I had? Renewal asks, what can God bring to life from this place? That shift in question changes everything. It moves you from looking backward to looking forward. It moves you from demanding that God restore the old thing to trusting that He is building something new.

Renewal does not require you to pretend the loss did not happen. It does not ask you to act like the pain was not real. It simply releases the demand that God's answer has to look like what you had before.

Nehemiah did not rebuild Jerusalem to make it exactly what it was 140 years earlier. He participated in what God was doing in a new moment, for a new generation, with a renewed sense of purpose. The ruins were real. But they were not the end of the story.

Your ruins are not the end of your story either.

Bible Verse: "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." - Isaiah 43:18-19 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question: Are you currently asking God for recovery, wanting things back exactly as they were, or are you open to the possibility that renewal might look different and even better than what you lost?

Quote: "Recovery asks the question, how do I get back what I had today? Renewal asks, what can God bring to life from this place?"

Prayer: God, I release my demand for things to go back to the way they were. Renew me from this place and help me trust that Your plan for what comes next is good.

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Hilton Head Island
community church

Day 4: The New Work Begins in You

Before Nehemiah ever picked up a stone, something happened inside of him. He prayed. He fasted. He sat with the weight of what was broken. The outward work of rebuilding Jerusalem did not begin with a plan or a permit. It began with a man who was willing to be changed before he tried to change anything around him.

That is how God tends to work. He does not just want to renew your circumstances. He wants to renew you. The new thing He is doing in your life will flow out of the new thing He is doing within you.

This is not a passive process. Renewal requires honesty about where you are. It requires a willingness to pray when you would rather just act. It requires courage to step into what God is building even when you cannot see the full picture yet.

But here is the encouragement: God does not ask you to be fully ready before He begins. He asks you to be willing. Nehemiah was not a builder by trade. He was a cupbearer to a king. But he was available, and he was surrendered, and that was enough for God to work with.

You do not have to have it all together. You just have to show up, open-handed, and let God begin the work in you that He wants to do through you.

Bible Verse

"Then I said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.'" - Nehemiah 2:17 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question

What might God be trying to renew in you personally before He can do a new work through you in the world around you?

Quote: "To do a new work through us, God is going to begin by doing a new work in us, each of us individually."

Prayer: Lord, begin the new work in me. Make me willing, open, and surrendered so that what You want to do through me can flow freely from what You are doing within me.

5-DAY *Devotional Guide*



Day 5: God Is Not Finished

There is a verse near the very end of the Bible that carries an enormous amount of hope. In Revelation, God speaks and says, "Behold, I am making all things new." Not, I made things new. Not, I will eventually get around to making things new. Present tense. Active. Ongoing. He is making things new right now.

That means whatever feels finished in your life is not finished in His hands. The relationship that fell apart. The faith that went dry. The dream that collapsed. The season that ended too soon. God looks at every one of those things and says, I am not done here.

He was not finished with Jerusalem when its walls were rubble. He was not finished with His people when they were in exile. And He is not finished with you.

The greatest things God wants to do in your life are still ahead. That is not a motivational phrase. It is a theological reality rooted in who He is. He is a God who redeems, restores, and renews. His track record is not one of abandonment. It is one of faithfulness that outlasts every ruin.

So take a breath today. Look at whatever feels broken or unfinished in your world. And let this truth settle in: God is not finished. He is already at work. And the best is still to come.

Bible Verse

"And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" - Revelation 21:5 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question

What would change about how you face your current circumstances if you truly believed that God's greatest work in your life is still ahead of you?

Quote: "Whatever you've been through, whatever tragedy may have happened to you in recent weeks or months or years, God wasn't finished with Jerusalem. He wasn't finished with his people. Church he's not finished with us."

Prayer: Father, remind me today that You are not finished with me. Where I see ruins, help me see Your hands already at work, making all things new.