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**Restored from Ruins:**  
**“Hoping for Restoration”**  
 Nehemiah 1: 1-11

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**Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:**

“Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage: anger at the way things are and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.” - Augustine

“Faith without works is dead (James 2: 17), and the same goes for hope. Without costly action, hope can soften into sentimentality. *With* costly action, hope may harden into reality . . . Hope is the reach of our hearts for the cure. It’s the reach of our hearts toward what we think will fulfill us, secure us, save us - and not just us, but also the whole world . . . Classical Christian hope centers on Jesus Christ *alone*, rejecting his rivals as pseudo-saviors.” - Cornelius Plantinga

“O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.” - Psalm 131: 3

**Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:**

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- Hope can be fuzzy and irresolute - very conceptual. Interact with Plantinga’s assertion above that “without costly action, hope can soften into sentimentality”. How can hope for God’s restoration move from fuzzy to reality in your life?
- What do you make of Augustine’s definition of hope? Which of the two beautiful daughters resonate more with you? Why?
  - What about the current state of the Church and God’s Kingdom seems to be in ruin or compromised?
  - Where are those needs calling for your anger and courage?
- Nehemiah spends nearly 4 months in lament and prayer once he learns of the degradation of God’s people and God’s city.
  - How does such a lengthy season of lament strike you?
  - How can we cultivate a freedom for ourselves or people in our lives to lament -especially when our culture and ordinary life really don’t have patience for extended seasons of sorrow?
  - How long is it okay to not be okay? Why?
- How does Nehemiah’s prayer connect to the larger story of what God is doing the world over to bring about redemption and restoration?
  - What is he remembering and treasuring about God’s history of and promise of restoration?
  - How does such a connection enable him understand himself and his own particular circumstances?
  - How does such a connection empower him to respond to his circumstances with courage and action?
  - What are you facing right now that can become understandable and addressable by remembering the larger story of redemption and restoration God is working out?