
Restored from Ruins:
 “Fears Relieved”
 Nehemiah 6: 1-16

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“Fear God!” is a call that puts us in our place and puts all other fears, hopes, and aspirations in their place.” - Derek Kidner

“Strengthen weak hands,
 and make firm the feeble knees.
 Say to those who have an anxious heart,
 ‘Be strong; fear not!
 Behold, your God
 will come with vengeance,
 with the recompense of God.
 He will come and save you.’” - Isaiah 35: 3-4

“As we might guess, far from gradually becoming extinct in adulthood, our fears increase throughout our lives. What was once a small family of worries quietly conducts an aggressive breeding program to become a teeming community of palpable fears and private anxieties. The code by which fear and anxiety live is primal: multiply. As we possess more things, care about more people, accumulate more bad experiences, and watch the evening news, it is as if we absorb fear. If they are not obvious in your own life, perhaps it’s because you have been living in a war zone your entire life. At first you noticed every gunshot. After a while the mayhem blends in with the rustle of the trees, the TV, and the children playing in the other room. Fear gradually becomes the background noise of everyday life.” - Ed Welch, *Running Scared*

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?
- What fears do you carry around with you?
 - Which “what-if” fears are the background noise of your life?
 - Which “what is” fears are the background noise of your life?
- Which of the strategies that Sanballat and the other “haters” employ are you most vulnerable to?
 - Distraction? Discredit (innuendo and reputation tarnishing)? Intimidation?
 - Keller often says, “Follow the pathway of your fears back into your heart to discover the things than you love more than God.”
 - What do our fears reveal about our trust or lack of trust in God’s care and sovereignty?
- The sermon asserted that an essential move of Christian discipleship is to leave off praying “Lord, change *this!*” and to start praying “Lord, strengthen *me!*”
 - Is it frustrating the this side of heaven we will not be exempt from the causes of friction, fear, and brokenness, that God has not promised to give us a charmed life even though we have faith in Christ?
 - What circumstance are you currently facing that you need to have God’s strength meet and empower you? How is faith in “Who is!” reframing the fear of “what if” for you?