
**Restored from Ruins:
“Every Member Ministry”
Nehemiah 3: 1-32**

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“It shouldn’t be an easy walk from the pew to the weight bench, but it is made easy by a Christianity that looks more like a spiritual fitness program than a Gospel balm . . . The church is not like CrossFit; it is more like the hospital, or even the morgue. It is not a place where bad people go to be made good, but a place where bad people are loved in their badness.” – Conor Gwin, “My Church is Not CrossFit”

“The church is not in the world to teach sinners how to straighten up and fly right. That’s the world’s business; and on the whole it does a fairly competent—even gleefully aggressive—job of it. The church is supposed to be in the forgiveness business. Its job in filling pulpits is to find derelict nobodies who are willing to admit that they’re sinners and mean it. It’s supposed to take sheep who can be nothing but lost ... and stand them up to proclaim that lostness, deadness, uselessness, and nothingness are God’s cup of tea. The church’s job is not to go around implying that those desperate states are conditions we must get over as quickly as possible once we’ve been found; its true work is to invite us all to go moonstruck over the news that the one operative consideration in our life is the Passion of the Finder to find.” – Robert Farrar Capon

“It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God’s mission.” – Christopher Wright

“The idea of a missional church is far from a new idea . . . If we understand the church from our biblical theology as that community of people chosen and called since Abraham to be the vehicle of God’s blessing to the nations, what else can the church be but missional? This is who we are and what we are here for. Indeed, as a friend of mine said recently, ‘All this talk of ‘missional church’ sounds to me like talking about a ‘female woman’. If it’s not missional, it’s not church.’” – Christopher Wright

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?
- While in many ways this passage is uninspiring and inaccessible to us because it’s a list of names and places that are unfamiliar and hard to pronounce, what do you make of the fact that these people are not nameless or faceless to God – that you are known and remembered by name to God?
 - When is that distant for you? When is it dear to you?
- Gwin and Capon in the first two quotations above make the case that the church is utterly unique in its vocation and mission in the world.
 - Why do those outside of the church and even Christians settle for Gospel as a spiritual fitness program?
 - Why is the Church not simply trying to get people to “straighten up and fly right”?
 - How does this passage from Nehemiah and the book as a whole fit into and reflect the uniqueness of our mission as God’s church?
- The sermon asserted that in order to give ourselves to the building of God’s Kingdom we need to honor our unique contributions and our unified, common goal.
 - What is your unique contribution? When do you feel a part of the overarching work?