

# THE *Nehemiah* CODE

It's Never Too Late  
for a New Beginning

*O. S. Hawkins*

**COUNTRYMAN**  
A Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers

  
**THOMAS NELSON**  
Since 1798

# Click Here to Purchase the Full Book

*The Nehemiah Code*

© 2018 by O. S. Hawkins

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Inc.

Thomas Nelson titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, fund-raising, or sales promotional use. For information, please e-mail [SpecialMarkets@ThomasNelson.com](mailto:SpecialMarkets@ThomasNelson.com).

Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-0-7180-9138-5

*Printed in China*

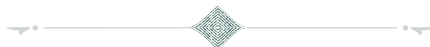
18 19 20 21 22 DSC 6 5 4 3 2 1



I love the words of Nehemiah 1:11, which say,

*“For I was the king’s cupbearer.”*

*The Nehemiah Code* is dedicated to all those faithful “cupbearers” of King Jesus, faithful servants who ministered with dedication and determination in out-of-the-way, small places where they often wondered if they had been forgotten. They existed on meager pastors’ salaries with little to nothing extra to put aside for their declining years. Since all the royalties and author’s proceeds from *The Nehemiah Code* go to support them, you have a part in being Christ’s hand extended to them by purchasing this book. Through Mission:Dignity, we are on a mission to bring dignity and security to retired pastors, their wives, and, now in most cases, their widows, helping them live out their final years without being financially forgotten. As one almost-ninety-year-old pastor’s widow wrote recently, “Thanks to Mission:Dignity, I get to eat at night now, and it is not just a piece of toast.” Learn more about Mission:Dignity by visiting [www.GuideStone.org](http://www.GuideStone.org) and clicking on “Mission:Dignity.”

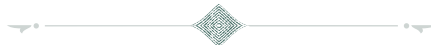






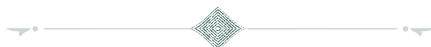
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction: The Nehemiah Code .....                           | 1  |
| PART ONE: REBUILDERS GET STARTED RIGHT                          |    |
| Chapter 1: Make an Honest Evaluation .....                      | 11 |
| Chapter 2: Identify with the Need .....                         | 17 |
| Chapter 3: Take Personal Responsibility .....                   | 21 |
| Chapter 4: Move Out of Your Comfort Zone ....                   | 25 |
| PART TWO: REBUILDERS BUILD A TEAM SPIRIT                        |    |
| Chapter 5: Start with Your Goal in Mind .....                   | 37 |
| Chapter 6: Seize Your Opportunities .....                       | 41 |
| Chapter 7: Make a Careful Analysis of<br>Your Situation .....   | 47 |
| Chapter 8: Motivate Your People to Get off<br>Dead Center ..... | 53 |
| Chapter 9: Stay on Track .....                                  | 61 |
| PART THREE: REBUILDERS LET GO WITHOUT<br>LETTING UP             |    |
| Chapter 10: Set Clear Objectives with<br>Specific Tasks .....   | 77 |
| Chapter 11: Pick the Right Person for the<br>Right Job .....    | 81 |
| Chapter 12: Be an Example Yourself .....                        | 85 |





|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 13: Hold People Accountable . . . . .                    | 89  |
| Chapter 14: Give a Genuine Pat on the Back . . . . .             | 95  |
| PART FOUR: REBUILDERS UNDERSTAND “YAC” IS WHAT<br>REALLY MATTERS |     |
| Chapter 15: Deal with Conflict Head-On . . . . .                 | 109 |
| Chapter 16: Make Proper Adjustments . . . . .                    | 119 |
| Chapter 17: Keep Doing What Is Right . . . . .                   | 125 |
| Chapter 18: Rally the Troops . . . . .                           | 129 |
| PART FIVE: REBUILDERS NEVER CUT WHAT THEY<br>CAN UNTIE           |     |
| Chapter 19: There Is a Time to Back Off . . . . .                | 143 |
| Chapter 20: There Is a Time to Stand Up . . . . .                | 149 |
| Chapter 21: There Is a Time to Give In . . . . .                 | 153 |
| Chapter 22: There Is a Time to Reach Out . . . . .               | 159 |
| PART SIX: REBUILDERS FINISH STRONG                               |     |
| Chapter 23: Stay Off the Side Streets: Keep<br>Focused . . . . . | 177 |
| Chapter 24: Stay Off the Sidelines: Keep<br>Faithful . . . . .   | 185 |
| Epilogue . . . . .   | 195 |
| Appendix: Nehemiah 1–6 . . . . .                                 | 199 |
| Mission: Dignity . . . . .                                       | 211 |
| About the Author . . . . .                                       | 212 |





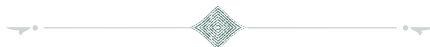
## INTRODUCTION

### *The Nehemiah Code*

*It's Never Too Late for a New Beginning*

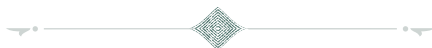
*R*ebuilding. Who among us is not in need of an occasional new beginning as we journey through different periods of life? Some of us deal with relationships that need to be rebuilt. Some are in the process of rebuilding businesses. Most coaches are continually engaged in the rebuilding process. Other people are seeking to rebuild their integrity after a misstep. Some are seeking to rebuild after divorce. Many who have lost loved ones are rebuilding their own lives. Some are rebuilding self-confidence and hoping for a better future. In one way or another, most of us will spend some or much of the next year trying to rebuild something. The good news is . . . *it's never too late for a new beginning.*

Nehemiah lived twenty-five hundred years ago, and he “wrote the book” on rebuilding. God recorded it for us and placed it in the Bible for all posterity. Who was Nehemiah (pronounced Nee-uh-mí-uh)? He was neither a preacher nor a prophet. Nehemiah was a civil servant, an



ordinary guy, who applied some universal principles that enabled him to rebuild a broken city and, in the process, a lot of broken hopes. He has left us some secrets to his success, a sort of hidden “code” if you will, which can become a fountain of hope and strength to anyone and everyone who will apply his formula. The journey we are about to make, as we walk with him through the pages of his book, will enable us to apply some marvelous truths to our lives and to step into a new beginning ourselves.

Nehemiah’s story unfolds after the reign of King Solomon in Jerusalem. The kingdom was now divided. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been ruled by a series of wicked kings, not a good one among them. Then, in 722 BC, the Assyrian assault swept them away into a captivity from which they never returned. The Southern Kingdom lasted until 586 BC, when it was finally devastated and destroyed by the Babylonians. Their holy city of Jerusalem was virtually leveled and decimated. The temple was demolished, the wall of the city was broken down, and its gates were burned. The leading Jews were taken away as captives to Babylon, and once there, the psalmist says they hung their harps upon the willow trees in deep despair (Psalm 137:1–2). After several years, the Persians broke the Babylonian supremacy and allowed some of the Jews to return home, which they did. They began to rebuild



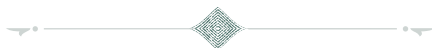


their temple and city, but the sheer magnitude of the task caused them to give up. Years passed. The city, still broken and burned, was in dire need of rebuilding.

In stepped Nehemiah, a Jew still in exile, with a cushy civil service job complete with benefits and retirement. But Jerusalem burned in his heart. He left Babylon to return to Jerusalem, armed with a single, focused objective to rally the people, rebuild their hope, and, ultimately, rebuild their Holy City.

Nehemiah had a plan for rebuilding. He saw the end from the beginning. He got started right, he built a team spirit with those around him, and he finished strong. In doing so, he provides us with a “code” in these following pages that, if applied to our own experience, can enable us to rebuild some broken walls in our own lives and reinforce our own legacies. Nehemiah’s message to us across the centuries is plain and powerful: *It is never too late for a new beginning!*

The longest journey always begins with the first step, so let’s turn the page and learn how to “get started right.”







# PART 1

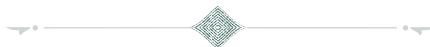
## *Rebuilders* *Get Started Right*





Those successful in rebuilding their lives or their legacies have one thing in common: they get started right. If you are a golfer, you are keenly aware that the most important shot in golf is the tee shot, the first shot. Every new hole presents the golfer with a new beginning. At each hole, you step up onto the tee and hit your first shot. That shot generally determines how well you will play the hole. If you drive the ball into the woods, you have to scramble with a second and often a third shot just to get on the green. If your tee shot goes out of bounds, you are penalized additional strokes and the loss of distance. However, if you drive the ball straight down the fairway and into position for the second shot to the green, you are well on your way to achieving your goal of par for the hole. So many players never score well in golf because they spend most of their time trying to make up yardage lost by poor tee shots. Getting a good start is essential, whether we are playing golf or seeking to rebuild a life.

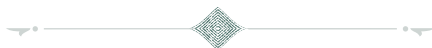
There is a real sense in which *rebuilding* something is



often a bigger challenge than building something from scratch. During my days as a pastor, I was privileged to lead two of the greatest churches in America. Both were in the heart of a city, downtown, in the midst of millions of people. One was in a cosmopolitan, secular, and virtually unchurched area on the south Florida coast. The other was a historic congregation in Texas filled with tradition and deeply held heritage. The challenge in Florida was to build a myriad of ministries without a lot of history and tradition. The task in Texas was not to build, but to *rebuild* on the foundation laid by two previous pastors who had collectively served the church for an entire century. The effort at the second church was by far the more difficult.

When we are in the process of rebuilding (no matter what it is we are seeking to rebuild), there are not just things that need to be *done*, but things that need to be *undone* as well. There are habits that need to be broken and sometimes hearts that need to be healed. Anyone who has ever sought to rebuild a marriage, a business, a dream, or a church knows this to be true. It often is simply easier to walk away and start over than it is to invest the effort and energy needed for rebuilding. If we are ever going to be successful in rebuilding, it is essential that we get started right.

For some, simply getting started—much less getting started right—is the hardest part of the entire rebuilding



process. Fortunately for us, Nehemiah was an expert on getting started right. For decades, the Jews had seen the need to rebuild the broken wall and burned gates of Jerusalem. Some had even given it a try, then faltered and failed because of the sheer volume of the task. Nehemiah, however, came on the scene and accomplished this awesome task in less than two months. And a huge factor in his success was in the way he got started. In the first chapter of the Bible book bearing his name, Nehemiah's example outlines for us four steps to getting started in our own rebuilding process. Rebuilders get started right by

1. making an honest evaluation,
2. identifying with the need,
3. taking personal responsibility, and
4. moving out of their comfort zones.

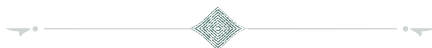
These principles work no matter what we are seeking to rebuild in life. Consider it this way: Have you ever needed to lose some weight? I have. Have you ever needed to start an exercise program? I have. Have you ever needed to rebuild a broken relationship that is lying dormant? I have. And we both know that the hardest part of any of those challenges is just getting started. Nehemiah devoted the first chapter of his book to getting started with the rebuilding task. The rest of his book then relates to the





unfolding principles that, when applied, will enable us to accomplish our own personal rebuilding tasks.

So now it is time to step up to the first tee, tee up your ball, and hit it straight down the middle of the fairway. Yes, rebuilders get started right, and when they do, they discover . . . *it's never too late for a new beginning!*







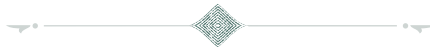
# 1

## MAKE AN HONEST EVALUATION

*The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.”*

—NEHEMIAH 1:1-3

*N*ehemiah opened his memoirs with the news of a report he received from distant Jerusalem. Hearing of someone who had recently returned from a visit, Nehemiah inquired about the status of the Jewish people and the condition of the Holy City itself. The report was not what he had hoped to hear: “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great



distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire” (Nehemiah 1:3).

If Nehemiah was to get started right in his task of rebuilding, his first step was to *make an honest evaluation* of the condition of Jerusalem. Although a remnant of the Jews had returned to their homeland and the temple was in place, there was only a semblance of normalcy. The wall of the city was still broken down from the destruction years earlier when the Babylonians had devastated the city. The gates were still unhinged, burned with fire. Those who had returned had dishonored God with their lifestyles and neglect of the temple, and they found themselves mired in deep “distress.”

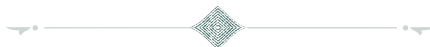
It was time to face the facts. First, the broken wall was in need of being rebuilt to provide safety and security for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And, second, as long as the gates were burned, the enemy would have easy access to the city.

---

We will never get started right until we make our own honest evaluation of the situation.

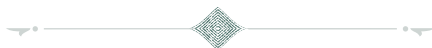
---

Many of us falter and fail in the rebuilding process at this very point—we don’t take the time to make a thorough and careful enough evaluation of our circumstances and situation. For some, it is hard to get to the place of admitting our need, of



admitting that some of our own walls are broken and some of our own gates are burned. I know men and women who have met premature death because they would not face the warning signs of pain in their bodies. We all know those who waited too long to go to a physician to get an honest evaluation of their situation. The same can often be said regarding relationships, or, for that matter, anything else that needs to be rebuilt. If we are ever going to rebuild, we must first get started right. And we will never get started right until we make our own honest evaluation of the situation.

There are at least three approaches people take when seeking to rebuild something that is broken in their lives. One is the way of the “superficial optimist.” The emphasis here is on the word *superficial*. This is a cosmetic approach that deals only with surface issues. These are people who are constantly in the process of trying to put a positive spin on difficult situations, often pretending a problem does not even exist. The superficial optimist will resist making any semblance of an honest evaluation, wishfully thinking that if he or she just waits long enough or hunkers down deep enough then everything will eventually be made right. The ancient prophet Jeremiah had this person in mind when he said there were some who say, “‘Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace” (Jeremiah 8:11).



Then, there are others who approach the process of rebuilding as “busy optimists.” That is, they admit there is a problem, but they attack it by trying to get everyone around them to be as busy as they can be. These people set up new structures and new organizational charts. They acquire new personnel. They develop new slogans and motivate the troops with all types of positive-thinking techniques. But they never get around to honestly evaluating and addressing the situation. And all the new policies, new people, new plans, and new procedures in the world can’t keep a ship afloat if it has holes in the hull.

Finally, there are those like Nehemiah, who make an honest evaluation of the situation right from the beginning. They have the courage to face the root problems and deal with them directly. We might refer to them as “honest optimists.” They have the strength and patience, as well as the wisdom and understanding, to address the systemic issues and actually work to correct them. Those who make such honest evaluations are not afraid of offending others or making enemies. They are not intimidated by threats, and they cannot be formed and fashioned into someone else’s mold. Such a person is our man, Nehemiah. He got started right by making an honest evaluation of his situation.

There may be many reading these words who are



in need of rebuilding—perhaps it’s a relationship, self-confidence, or even a life—but they have never arrived at the place of admitting it. Perhaps you take the superficial optimist’s approach, simply dealing with surface issues and ever saying “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace.” Or it may be that you more closely identify with the busy optimist. Instead of honestly evaluating your situation, you busily cover up the problems by moving on to new people and new projects. Learn from Nehemiah, the “honest optimist.” Look at him. Listen to him. He made an honest evaluation. He inquired. He learned. Then he admitted that, not only was the wall broken down and the gates burned off their hinges, but the people were in distress. And, as if that were not bad enough, they had become a reproach to their God.

Is there any unfinished business in your life? Are there any walls that need rebuilding? Those who win at the game of life always finish what they start. But, before that can happen, they get a good start by making an honest evaluation of the problem. Rebuilders who go through the painful process of accurately assessing their situations are soon on the road to the realization that . . . *it’s never too late for a new beginning!*

