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FORWARD

This file is “a work in progress.” It’s been more than five years since our home in Divide, Colorado burned, but the lessons from the destruction and rebuilding process keep on coming. I’m compelled to share the richness in the principles that I’m beginning to understand and a hope in the process of life restoration. I write from a perspective which comes from being a Christian. However, no matter what your religious or philosophical perspective, or lack thereof, hard times will come upon you. It may not be a fire, but sickness, divorce, accidents, addictions, financial hardship, the death of those we love, and personal trials affect us all at some time. I believe that what one does with those times and the effect they have on you and those you love depends in great measure on how you apply some eternal principles, either consciously or unconsciously. I’ve tried to record some of the lessons my wife and I have learned from our small trial for two reasons: (1) It helps me process the events and better understand myself and (2) it may help someone else recover from their personal trial. Of course, if you persevere through these thoughts, some developed and some only bare sketches, you’ll see that what I’m trying to communicate is much more than principles, that I’m only exploring the surface of what may be, in truth, unfathomable depths of riches.

With that in mind, if you would find it useful, critique and challenge this writing and send your thoughts to me.

INTRODUCTION - GOD'S PLAN

Most of us are aware of the general concept that God has a plan for our lives. Whether we believe it for ourselves or not, we've heard the saying, "God has a wonderful plan for your life." When I first heard that, I applied it to the possibility that there was a career path, a vocation, a place to live, and/or a wife and family that I could choose within this alleged plan. I've since found that those aspects were to be more than possible, but that The Plan first involves a concept much more basic and personal.

The Plan is Personal

A central theme in scripture is that God desires a personal relationship with human beings: that each of us can become a habitation, a home for His Presence. From the Garden of Eden to Moses' Tabernacle in the wilderness to the ancient architectural wonder of Solomon's Temple to the first century birth of the church, Scripture uses words and images for places where we live and worship: from "tents" (tabernacles), the "temple", "sanctuary", the "house of the Lord," "Mt Zion," to the "City of God" (Jerusalem), God expresses His Plan to live His life in and through us.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam chose to turn from a living relationship with God. After they had disobeyed God,

Gen 2:8 Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

So he and Eve were banned from the Garden, but God didn't give up on humankind. A plan was in place to restore that relationship. In the wilderness, God gave Moses instructions for the Children of Israel,

Ex 25:8 "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and **I will dwell among them.** (also Exo 29:45-46; Lev 26:11-12)

Two thousand years later, Paul explained to the church at Corinth:

II Cor 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent (tabernacle), is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

I CO 3:16-17 Don't you know that **you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?**

And then John saw the ultimate dwelling place, the City of God, where we will be together with God.

REV 21:1-3 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (2) I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "**Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.**"¹

So that's how a tent or a building or a temple and even a city is supposed to be – The Dwelling Place of the Lord God. In the more complex model of a temple, the starts by the Spirit of God being born in us. The building process proceeds until its completed, then furnished and finally fully occupied by His Spirit...filled with life, filled with light, filled with glory! But is that the way it has been for you? Have some of the plans and details been missed along the way?

Patterns

In all these accounts, whether they describe a sanctuary, building, city or our hearts, God gives us patterns in assembling or construction, from the detailed plans and design of the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon to John's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. Our human tendency is to analyze these patterns and try to implement or reproduce them on our own. Builders often use the plans for a fine custom home to build another. Sometimes, in the church, we'll pattern next week's service after last week's, since we thought that one was so successful. We might even build an entire denomination on proven patterns and forms of worship.

¹ My emphasis

And many of have built our personal lives or families or churches or communities on principles, principles we recognize as being true and proven. People throughout the world do this and, to a measure, are successful. But God is in the “custom-building” business. He doesn’t do developments of “cookie-cutter houses”, “little houses on the hilltop made of ticky-tacky”, with only the colors or rearranged floor plans differentiating each of us. We’re unique custom-built, with special features for the Master’s comfort and pleasure.

Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (KJV)

But the wonder of God’s plan is that it is one of living relationships, first and foremost, established and founded with Him and then, on that basis, with one another. On all levels, He desires not only to build His house, but to live in His house, to show His life through it, to manifest His glory, in individuals, families, churches, his holy nation and through all of creation.

All that can be pretty cosmic, so, God gives us illustrations and parables in His Word to help us to better understand. He also uses day to day circumstances in our personal lives as illustrations, testimonies of His power and personal interest, in practical outworkings of His plans. He reveals His plans to reveal Himself.

Death and Resurrection Life

But what do we do if the house God would inhabit meets with disaster? The Ark of the Covenant was lost to the Phillistines, Solomon’s Temple was destroyed and even Jerusalem was destroyed. And personal disasters strike our lives.

Isaiah64:11 Our holy and beautiful temple, Where our fathers praised You, Is burned up with fire; And all our pleasant things are laid waste.

What is God’s plan for rebuilding? God has a plan and it’s not just to refurbish the old. It’s a new and better and glorified habitation.

JOH 2:19-21 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

PREPARATION FOR THE FIRE

Examining Foundations

A long-term End-of-Year tradition in the Wood Family has been to reflect on the past year and ask the Lord for an indicational word or Scripture for the coming year. In December 1997, as we looked back on the year, we saw that there had been a general emphasis about a return to “true foundations.” I was somewhat aware that in some churches and even in the Christian media, the recurrent theme of foundations was surfacing. In our small mountain community fellowship, we had collectively struggled with working that out by evaluating relationships, seeking the Lord and searching the scriptures about what spiritual foundations really are, and even starting up a Foundations Bible study class.

MAT 7:24-27 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (25) The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (26) But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. (27)The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” (also Luke 6:48-49)

God with Us

How could it be that the Creator of a Universe so vast could live within anything so finite as a tent, a temple, a city or a human body? God has made the Way. In fact, He is The Way!

Immanuel

God through Christ Jesus reconciles the separation between God and man.

PHI 2:5-7 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: (6) Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,(7) but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

ISA 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

...meaning “God with us.”

Jesus' Sacrifice

Jesus shed His blood on the cross so we could have life in the spirit.

Phil2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

TIT 3:3-7 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. (4) But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, (5) he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, (6) whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Then Paul tells us in

COL 1:26-27 “ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.(27) To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

How incredible!

New Birth

JOH 3:3-5 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (4) "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" (5) Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

JOH 3:6-10 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. (7) You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' (8) The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (9) "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. (10) "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"

New Heart

Ezekiel had said,

EZE 11:19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

EZE 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

1CO 2:13-14 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. (14) The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

2CO 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

1PE 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

So like Mary we can say,

LUK 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Promise Scriptures

Then as we looked toward the new year, we concluded that He was saying to us that the new year was to be a year of New Beginnings as well as a time of restoration. He freshly quickened Promise scriptures like

II Cor 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, the old is gone, the new has come." "Behold old things have passed away, behold I make all things new"

JER 30:17 'I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD, 'because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares.' (18) "This is what the LORD says: "I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have compassion on his dwellings; the city will be rebuilt on her ruins, and the palace will stand in its proper place.

JER 30:19-20 From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. I will add to their numbers, and they will not be decreased; I will bring them honor, and they will not be disdained. Their children will be as in days of old, and their community will be established before me."

Prayer for Renewal / Refiner's Fire

Further, there had been an ongoing desire for a renewed experience of the presence of God. We were asking for the Fire of God—renewal -- we were blithely singing songs like "Refiner's Fire, my heart's one desire" and "O Sweet Wind", with lines like, "There's a fire burning, consuming you and me..." God was putting in us a desire, but He was also giving us some hints that there would be costs associated with receiving our desire.

Intellectual understanding of suffering

Of course, we all were aware of the principle that new life often is preceded by pain or death, and scripture is clear about that, whether it be illustrated through childbirth (Rom 8:22), or most clearly, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Rom8:17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Then in February, I began a study about intercession; this, in turn, led to study about suffering. A clear conclusion of this study was that our loving Father, the Sovereign of the Universe, in his infinite grace and mercy, uses suffering to enable his children to receive the fullness of His inheritance in the saints, (which is His very character); and that, even as our flesh does all it can to escape uncomfortable circumstances, there is a very real necessity to be refined through suffering. Keep in mind, just as King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to destroy the three young men in the fiery furnace, God meant to preserve them and glorify His Name in the process.

Acts14:21-22 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

IPet1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Col 1:24-27 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So, inasmuch was possible, we were prepared for April 1, 1998.

THE FIRE

PSA 104:4-5 He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.

On April 1st, a fire swept through our house. My wife, Lynn and our dogs were at home. They escaped the house with the clothes and fur on their back, but nothing else. The intensity of the fire completely leveled the fuel-filled garage, leaving our Izusu Trooper, reduced to 30" high, the tallest object. The 2-story structure in the center of the house was burned but still stood, with gaping holes in the roof and second story floor. Throughout the structure were scattered salvageable possessions. The Family Room, at the far end of the house, was smoke damaged, but not destroyed. In it were family videos and picture albums, none of which were seriously damaged. But, in just a few minutes, most of our worldly possessions were lost and our lives were completely rearranged.

God is Sovereign

From the first day, we had to face in a new measure who we thought God is. Does He really love us and have a plan of life for us? Can we trust Him in all things? As I drove the 49 miles from work to home, my mind raced in imagining the fire. But in the middle of all that, God was still quietly speaking. As I made my way through the firemen and vehicles in our driveway, not yet considering the implications of inadequate insurance and the challenges of rebuilding, I heard, "The latter house shall be greater than the former house." That verse comes from a series of wonderful promises in Haggai:

HAG 2:6 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. (7) I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. (8) 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty. (9) 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house, (the latter house shall be greater than the former house)' says the LORD Almighty.

The context of this passage was in reference to the rebuilding of Solomon's temple. The people looking at the rubble of the walls of Jerusalem and the newly restored temple foundation, needed encouragement in their faith. Perhaps presumptuously, I applied that promise to my immediate situation, "The latter house shall be greater than the former house," but I now know for certain it applies to our individual lives, or families and all those who would come into a living relationship with a Living God.

HAG 2:9 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."

God is Good

Through the process of restoration and the accompanying trials, we came to understand the fundamental issue: Is God truly a Good God? Wrapped up in that question of His character are:

- Do I believe that in His sovereignty He will not only allow, but will **cause** hard and difficult things to happen?
- Do I trust Him in His plans?

It was more than five years after the fire, seeking understanding and slowly connecting God's Word to my personal situation, that the King David's words in Psalm 119 began to make sense:

Ps 119:65 **You have dealt well with Your servant,**² O Lord, according to Your word. 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge, For I believe Your commandments.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.

68 You are good, and do good; Teach me Your statutes.

² My emphasis

71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

72 The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

73 Your hands have made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.

74 Those who fear You will be glad when they see me, Because I have hoped in Your word.

75 I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

Could it truly be that God arranges personal circumstances to the minutest detail, totally for our good? I was familiar with Paul's statement:

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

But now I would be tested as to whether I believed that for myself.

God Will Preserve Us

The scripture attributes the shaking of all things directly to God. Nevertheless, in His sovereign love, in the middle of trials that He Himself brings, He will keep and preserve us.

ISA 2:6-9 "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. "For the foundations of the earth are the LORD'S; upon them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his saints. . .

Ps 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

In our incident, Lynn escaped without injury, with not even a smell of smoke. I was reminded of the three Israelite children in Babylon. When King Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the furnace, not even the smell of fire was on them and the only thing that burned were their bonds. A question for us could be: what bonds have been/are being burned in this process?

Dan3:23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

ISA 43:1-2 But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. (2) When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

UNDERSTANDING THE FIRE AS AN ALLEGORY

God speaks through Allegories and Parables

For thousands of years, man has used allegories to communicate meaning within meaning. Since the Bible uses the form extensively, and this study applies it to a personal and actual incident, it is necessary to understand its meaning and use.

Definitions of Allegory

Webster's definition of Allegory: A story in which people, things and happenings have a symbolic meaning; the presenting of ideas by means of such stories.

Other Literary Definitions: Allegory is a form of *extended metaphor* in which objects and persons within a narrative are equated with meanings that lie *outside* the narrative itself. The allegorical figure exists simultaneously on *two levels of meaning*—the *literal* one (what the figures does in the narrative), and the *symbolic* level (what the figure stands for, outside the narrative). Thus, allegory evokes a dual interest: in the events, characters and setting presented; and in the ideas they represent or the significance they bear.

Allegory is a form of extended METAPHOR in which objects and persons in a narrative, either in prose or verse, are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. Thus it represents one thing in the guise of another—an abstraction in the guise of concrete IMAGE. The characters are usually PERSONIFICATIONS of abstract qualities, the action and the setting representative of the relationships among these abstractions. Allegory attempts to evoke a dual interest, one in the events, characters, and settings presented, and the other in the ideas they are intended to convey or the significance they bear. The characters, events, and setting may be historical, fictitious, or fabulous; the test is that these materials be so employed in a logical organization or pattern that they represent meanings independent of the action described in the surface story. Such meanings may be religious, moral, political, personal, or satiric. ...

It is important that one distinguish clearly between allegory and SYMBOLISM, which attempts to suggest other levels of meaning without making a structure of ideas a formative influence on the work as it is in allegory.

Among the kinds of allegory...are parable, fable, apogue, exemplum, and beast epic. (from Thrall, Hibbard, Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*)

Smith's Bible Dictionary defines allegory as a figure of speech, which has been defined by Bishop Marsh, in accordance with its etymology as, "a representation of one thing which is intended to excite the representation of another thing." ("A figurative representation containing a meaning other than and in addition to the literal." "A fable or parable; is a short allegory with one definite moral."—Encyc. Brit.) In every allegory there is a twofold sense—the immediate or historic, which is understood from the words, and the ultimate, which is concerned with the things signified by the words. The allegorical interpretation is not of the words, but of the thing signified by them, and not only may, but actually does, coexist with the literal interpretation in every allegory, whether the narrative in which it is conveyed be of things possible or real. An illustration of this may be seen in Galatians 4:24 where the apostle gives an allegorical interpretation to the historical narrative of Hagar and Sarah, not treating that narrative as an allegory in itself; as our Authorized Version would lead us to suppose, but drawing from it a deeper sense than is conveyed by the immediate representation. (Addison's *Vision of Mirza* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* are among the best allegories in all literature.)

ASV, KJV, RSV, DRB, WEB, TMB and WBT each use the term "allegory" in describing the covenantal relationships of Hagar and Sarah:

Ga 4:24 - Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. (RSV)

The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon transliterates from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #238, *Allegoreo* meaning "to speak figuratively or in a figure."

GAL 4:24 These things may be taken figuratively. .

Easton's Bible Dictionary cites the Galatians passage as use of an allegory and goes on to say "every parable is an allegory. Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-4) addresses David in an allegorical narrative. In the eightieth Psalm there is a beautiful allegory: "Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt," etc. In Eccl 12:2-6, there is a striking allegorical description of old age. "

1CO 10:6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

1CO 10:11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

From Ezekiel the RSV translates the word *machal* to allegory, while Strong's offers the following for *machal*:

1. proverb, parable
2. proverb, proverbial saying, aphorism
3. byword
4. similitude, parable
5. poem
6. sentences of ethical wisdom, ethical maxims

Eze 17:2 O mortal, propound a riddle, and speak an allegory to the house of Israel. (RSV)

Eze 24:3 And utter an allegory to the rebellious house and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Set on the pot, set it on, pour in water also; (RSV)

According to from Bloom, Philbrick, Blistein, *The Order of Poetry*: Allegory succeeds when it satisfies three sets of conditions:

- (a) its surface or literal story is interesting and exciting;
- (b) its abstract correlatives are clearly discernible and are consistent in their relationships with the personifications or symbols which represent them in the surface plot; and
- (c) the philosophical thesis thus acted out is of wide applicability to human experience.

Application of Allegory

Our house's burning and its process of restoration has been a present-day allegory somewhat supported by scriptural allegories. After the smoke cleared (so to speak), some of the finest details of the incident and the process of rebuilding became significant. In a circumstance encompassed by the Kingdom of God, things are not always what they seem. Circumstances often obscure deeper intentions and hidden patterns. God always wants us to see beyond the physical circumstances into What He's Saying and What He's Doing and Who He Is.

In a general sense God is building a habitation for Himself and the habitation is us, individually and as a church. In many ways and in many lives He's taking ruins and restoring them into something altogether new and better. So, in some very direct ways, this process applies to this particular incident for me, brings light and hope for healing of the trauma my family experienced, and helps explain the patterns of restoration God has in store for us as individuals, family, church and nations.

Remember that allegories are never altogether all-inclusive for everyone at the same time; at various times, some images and the application of some scripture may specifically apply to me and not to you or vice versa.

Similarly, some of the parallels I may apply may or may not apply in your thinking. However, allow God's word to speak to you today; filter out my opinions and misperceptions and seek to receive God's perspective,

HEB 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

2TI 3:16 all scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

God has designed His Word so that we must seek Him, ask Him, draw close to Him to find out what it really means. Jesus spoke in parables, in part, so that those who wanted to know what He meant, would come to Him to find out, and in the process, come to know Him and the character of God.

Mt13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' 16 "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

The multitudes heard the same parable; however, when they had received their blessings, e.g., witnessing or experiencing deliverance and healings, fellowship, being fed, etc., they went their way. The disciples, on the other hand, even though they understood no more than the multitudes, came to Jesus and asked Him what He meant:

Mt 13:34-36 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, 35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." 36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

Their reward: To know the mysteries of the kingdom and that most certainly includes knowing more and more of the heart and intentions of the Father.

Mt13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' 16 "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

DAY2 - VIEWING THE WRECKAGE

The day after the fire, a fierce snowstorm descended on Colorado. For two days, the insurance adjusters and fire inspectors could not come up the mountain to assess the damage. We were being sheltered by our friends the Sandusky's just a half-mile from our property, so the next day I made my way through about two feet of snow I made my way to survey the damage. I climbed the still standing stairway, stepping snow-covered ashes and debris. David's room was a pathetic sight. His bunk bed teetered at about 45 degrees into a hole in floor; and snow drifted in through the open ceiling. A ceramic E.T., made by Grandma Wood when David was a little boy, stood on the top of David's dresser faced toward the door. Black debris topped by snow covered most of it, but I could see that it was E.T. by his big right eye peeking out. I could almost hear him say, in his pitiful little squeaky voice, "Phone home"!

I stood in Jessica's room for a long time. I listened to the hush of the snow fall and watched it drift through the blown out window, landing on charred and wilted stuffed animals, slowly swirling into the blasted hallway. Her room looked as if a bomb had blown up in it with furniture upended and books scorched and scattered. It occurred to me how horrible it must be to experience war, earthquake or fire in a city, where house upon house, apartment upon apartment were destroyed, with each family and its possessions devastated, and no one to comfort and support, because all were suffering. My view reached through the window to our tranquil aspen forest, covered in beautiful white. I was so thankful for the loving support God had already given through our friends and neighbors.

Reminder of Preparation

Then I was reminded of our understanding of what this year was to bring: New beginnings, prayer for the Refiner's Fire, a return to foundations, a greater revelation of suffering...with promises like

PSA 66:12 You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.

I recalled the end-of-year expressions in prayer and song for revival – that He would send his fire.

Our God is a Consuming Fire

Somehow it hadn't registered that the cost of "New Beginnings" might be a violent or traumatic destruction of the old. Scriptures came to mind like

HEB 12:26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." (27) The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. (28) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

HEB 12:29 for our "God is a consuming fire." (Deu 4:24)

LAM 4:11 The LORD has given full vent to his wrath; he has poured out his fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations. (He started a fire in Zion that burned the city to its foundations. NLT)

Refining through Trials Necessary

IPE 1:6-9 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. (7) These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (8) Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, (9) for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

He will make us Worthy to be Priests

Jesus will make us worthy to be priests.

LUK 12:49 "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!

LUK 3:16-17 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (17) His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt 3:11-12)

MAL 3:2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. (3) He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,

MAL 3:4 and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. (also Zech 13:9)

Welcome the Fire

REV 3:14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

REV 3:17-19 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. (18) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.(19) Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

Often we don't recognize our need to be refined or its benefits. Even Aldous Huxley acknowledged the freedom a fire left him.

When one of those hellish Southern Californian brush fires destroyed the home where Aldous Huxley was living with his wife Laura they escaped with their lives, but Aldous's manuscripts, his precious collection of letters from great people of his day, and a library that had taken years to assemble were all reduced to ashes Anita Loos," Anita Loos once recalled. "I was in New York when I heard of the disaster, and hurried to phone Aldous my sympathy. 'It was a hideous experience,' he exclaimed. I could visualise his quizzical smile when he added, '**But it did make me feel extraordinarily clean.**'"

[Source: Anita Loos, *Kiss Hollywood Goodbye*]

Edison Fire

"[One] December evening the cry of 'Fire!' echoed through [Thomas Edison's] plant. Spontaneous combustion had broken out in the film room. Within moments all the packing compounds, celluloid for records, film and other flammable goods had gone up with a whoosh...

"When I couldn't find Father, I became concerned. Was he safe? With all his assets going up in smoke, would his spirit be broken? He was 67, no age to begin anew. Then I saw him in the plant yard, running toward me.

"'Where's Mom?' he shouted. 'Go get her! Tell her to get her friends! They'll never see a fire like this again!'"

"[At 5:30 the next morning, when the fire was barely under control, he called his employees together and announced: 'We're rebuilding!' One man was told to lease all the machine shops in the area. Another, to obtain a wrecking crane from the Erie Railroad Company. Then, almost as an afterthought he added, 'Oh, by the way. Anybody know where we can get some money?'

“Later on he explained, ‘You can always make capital out of disaster. We’ve just cleared out a bunch of old rubbish! We’ll build bigger and better on these ruins.’ With that he rolled up his coat for a pillow, curled up on a table and immediately fell asleep.”³

Don’t Quench the Spirit

1TH 5:19 Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”

In our lives, we need to let the fire burn. “Let the fire burn, burn the sacrifice.” Sure, in real life, we dug through the ashes and found some things that we saved. But in the long run, the cost and effort of removing what remained was in many ways far greater.

Sweet Fragrance or Smell of Death?

My place stunk. Partly burned clothes, half-melted roofing material, burned food – altogether not pleasant! When a fire burns hot and complete it’s different. When fire consumes and burns a sacrifice completely, it’s a barbeque, an attractive smell.

Similarly, the components of the incense the priests burned before the Lord are the same as used in Jesus’ burial. That was a burial that preceded Resurrection, not rotting, decaying death! It’s the same for us.

II Cor 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. *15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16* To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.

Am I Dead or “Mostly Dead”? -- Am I Crucified with Christ?

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Col 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Rom 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Move on to New Life

Is 43:18-26 This is what the LORD says-- (18) “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. (19) See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

(20) The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen (21) the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

(22) But you have not called upon me, O Jacob, but you have been weary of me of Israel. . .

³ Charles Edison, [The Electric Thomas Edison](#);

... (24 You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, (KJV:Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money)

There are several points in this scripture:

- (1) Leave the past behind - close the door on it
- (2) trust God in His new thing. Believe his promises of new life in the wasteland
- (3) Honor and praise Him for these promises, words of life
- (4) There is a renewed call to intimacy with the Lord and a need to respond to His call for relationship, intimacy with Him.

Spices

We'll see that spices in scripture speak of intimacy.

Calamus

One of the spices in scripture is Sweet cane. Sweet cane aka calamus is used for three things: perfume, incense and anointing oil. Kings and the high priests were anointed with holy anointing oil. (I Kings 1:39). In Song of Solomon 1:3 Jesus' name is said to be as perfume, ointment poured forth.

This ingredient of sweet cane, calamus provides sweetness to the anointing and sweetness to the perfume. It struck me that in recent weeks there has been a sweetness in the fellowship, something that was missing before.

And consider this, in the measure of this sweetness some things have begun to happen, as someone has said, it has been safe to come out, some of us, for the first time, have been free to share burdens, confess sins and some have been dramatically set free.

Oil

In Ex 30, God gives instructions to Moses about how to prepare anointing oil. (*turn there*)

The oil was to be compounded, certain spices infused with the oil and then the spices strained out, leaving a sweet smell in the oil. After the oil was prepared, it was used to anoint the tent of the tabernacle and all the furniture and the priests.

(Ex 27:20) The anointing oil itself speaks to us of the ministry of the H.S. who anoints us to minister. Made from pure olives, pressed, beaten.

Note: Gethsemane = oil press

Instructions for Preparation of the Oil

EXO 30:22-33

Then the LORD said to Moses,

(23) "Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane, (24) 500 shekels of cassia—all according to the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil.

(25) Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil.

Ingredients

Let's look at the 4 ingredients: myrrh, sweet cinnamon, cassia and sweet cane or calamus.

We need to see first that each of the ingredients comes from a plant or tree and how Israel, God's people are often compared to trees, vines or plants; and in many, if not most, cases God is desiring some kind of fruit from those trees or vines or plants, something nourishing, tasty or in this case, aromatic.

You'll notice that all the ingredients, including the olives of the olive oil, to be blended, must be pressed, beaten, crushed or ground to powder.

Contrite: (bruise, crush, humble, grind to powder)

Ps 34:18 The Lord is near to them who have a broken heart and saves those that are of a contrite spirit.

Ps 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Is 57:15 I dwell in the high and holy place, with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

God's promise here is to be near to, to save, to revive, to bring *new* life to the contrite heart.

Myrrh

is a gum that comes from a desert tree, *Commiphora myrrha*. You get it by cutting the tree or sometimes it even flows out spontaneously from the trunk. It's bitter to taste, but has a fragrant odor.

To compound it with the oil, it has to be pressed, crushed, pounded, smashed, pulverized. (contrite)
Where do we see myrrh in scripture concerning Jesus?

Mt 2:11 One of the Magi's gifts;

Mk 15:23 soldiers tried to give wine to Jesus mixed w/myrrh;

For Jesus' Burial

JOH 19:39-40 Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. (40) Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen.

So it was for preparation for Jesus' death. But Jesus has already died, been buried and is raised from the dead. But what about us?

II Cor 4:7-10 We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. I Die daily. I am crucified with Christ. Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus.

We need myrrh for own burial as well.

Myrrh in Preparation for the King.

Queen Esther prepared

EST 2:12 Before a maid's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of purification treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics.

Fragrance of the Lord Himself S of S 3:6, 5:1,5,13

Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense

Oil and Myrrh: associated with suffering, death, and also resurrection and preparation of the bride and bridegroom.

If we want to share in the fragrance of the Lord, one of the balanced ingredients of His anointing, we must share in his sufferings, die with Him and be raised in newness with Him.

Sweet Cinnamon; Cassia

These two ingredients are from tree bark. In order to become part of the anointing oil, the protective covering of the cinnamon tree and the cassia is stripped from the trees and then totally pulverized, made contrite, to be mixed with the oil:

Calamus or Sweet Cane or Sweet Flag

is a reed that has an aromatic scent even while it's growing.

Recall

Is 43:18:20 I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

Sweet cane grows only in wet places.

Job 8:11-12 Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water?

How is scent released? (breaking of cells)

Is 42:3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

The calamus blades have an aroma, but its roots are the most potent. So, to compound it into the anointing oil, its roots first had to be pulled out of the mire, then dried and then ground to powder.

I King 14:15 The Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water and He shall root up Israel...

So let's review the process of getting calamus as an ingredient:

- (1) God brings the water of life to previously dry ground, wasteland.
- (2) The Sweet cane, calamus grows from out of the mire. Even in its growing it puts out a fragrance.
- (3) But for it to be included in the anointing oil, it must be smitten, shaken in the water and its roots pulled up out of the mire.

Follow me on this: God breathed life into Adam who He had made from the earth. God's plan is that man share His life in the Spirit. But when Adam sinned, he lost his spiritual life. So his and his descendant's, the life of our soul in this earthly plane is dependent upon earthly things: air, water and nourishment from the fruit of the earth. But this earth will pass away and all the things of it. God has given us his Spirit and its life transforming power to restore us to life in him, life in the heavenlies, life in the spirit, life that is no longer rooted in the earth and the things of the earth.

Col 3:1-3 That's why Paul can say "Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth, for you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

In the scripture, in our old nature, we are like the reed. Our soul's roots are in the earth; we pull the water of life and nutrients from the earth through roots to nourish our cells. But God wants to transform our lives totally, completely. He uses the ingredients of what we are, what He has given us and combines those ingredients with His Spirit.

- (4) So God pulls us up out of the mire and then dries us out!

(ever felt like you're just drying up? God is nowhere to found? It could be that you're in the preparation process.)

(5) Rejoice! You get pulverized next! Imagine, ALL the hardness of my soul is reduced to a fine powder. No crusty lumps.

(6) Then the ingredients are weighed (that's the "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.") and

(7) They are compounded in specific balance into the oil.

Each of the ingredients, to be part of the anointing oil, had to be separated from its previous life, as bark, the protective outside of the tree, to resin from the very insides of the tree, to the very roots of the reed. Each was processed, each was crushed into powder (contrite), each was measured before it could be combined with oil.

Then, finally, the

Oil Ready for use.

Ex 30:26 Then use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony, (27) the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense,(28) the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand.

(29) You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy.

Q: What do the tent and furniture represent?

A: Christ and His Body

Ex 30:30 "Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests.

Ps 133:1-2 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.

Jesus is the head of a spiritual body. When we are one in His Spirit, the anointing of Christ, the Anointed One, flows from His head and drips down on us, who are covered in His priestly robe. What do the garments represent? righteousness of Christ

(3) As the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

The ingredients that were once locked in the resin and bark of trees and root of a reed is now part of the sweet aroma of the eternal heavens falling down on Zion, the church, as God's blessing.

(31) Say to the Israelites, 'This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. (That's us)

(32) Do not pour it on men's flesh

That anointing is to empower our spirit, not our flesh. That's why it's so important to allow the Lord to break down the hardness of our hearts, for us to humble ourselves, and be careful not to exalt our selves under his anointing.

Eph 5:2 Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering

Heb 12:2 We need to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Q: Where is the anointing? Jesus, by the HS, lives in you.

A: 1JO 2:20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

Jesus is the Living Water bringing life to the wasteland and creating a garden.

Q: What are these spices, ingredients for the anointing oil?

A: They represent the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control.

Q: Where are these spices, ingredients for the anointing oil?

They too are within us.

They have been and are being worked in us:

ROM 5:3-5 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; (4) perseverance, character; and character, hope. (5) And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

I Pet 4:13 Rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.

The Joy of Christ and His Bride

PSA 45:7-11 God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

(8) All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad.

Now he's going to talk about you, The Bride.

(9) Daughters of kings are among your honored women; at your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir.

(10) Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house.

(11) The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord. Do you believe that? Do you believe the Lord of Lords, King of Kings is enthralled by your beauty?? His Word is True!

Ps 92:13-14 Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.

This is the season. This is the year. This is the acceptable time.

The Secret Garden

Some of us have never seen or experienced the streams or the garden. It's like the story, The Secret Garden, there was once a beautiful garden, well-tended and enjoyed by the master, his wife and all his household. Then some terrible thing happened and the garden hasn't been visited for a long time. It has high walls surrounding it with a secret gate locked. And we need someone, (a child) who has the key, to open the gate, tend the garden, so that the garden and all its fruits and spices can be enjoyed by the master once again.

Remember the promises from

ISA 58:11 The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Jesus said that out of our innermost being would flow rivers of living water.

But the Lord implies that this garden is hidden, locked up – something to be discovered.

Song of Songs 4:12-16 You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.

(13) Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, with henna and spikenard,(14) spikenard and saffron, *calamus and cinnamon*, with every kind of incense tree, with *myrrh* and aloes and all the finest spices.

(notice there are nine)

Some of us hear all that about sweet smells and good fruit and a louder voice turns on and says, “That’s not true for you! You’re nothing but a weed patch, full of stink weeds. The fruit of your life is only selfishness, lust, hatred, gossip, arguments.” There only one answer for that voice: death. Jesus died for all of that in you and more and wants you to share in His life. He’s giving you His Spirit so that you can turn from your old life, repent, receive His forgiveness and say with our brother, Paul, Reckon your self dead in deed unto sin, but alive unto Christ Jesus and

Gal 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live; Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

As a new creation in Christ, death has been swallowed up by resurrection life. Believe what God says of you,

SofS 4:15 You are a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon.

Welcome the Trials

S of S 4:16 Awake, O north wind, and come.

She desires that the new inward beauty He is developing in her could become a fragrance that would flow out and bless Him. But, just like pot pourri, you need to bruise the fibers of the flowers to release their fragrance. The north wind represents chastening or correction. So she welcomes the wind and gives permission for it to bring about the changes.

But that’s not all!

Expect God’s blessing

S of S 16b Come, South wind! Blow upon my garden, that its fragrance may flow out. The S wind represents blessing and edification. Its gentle warm breeze distributes the fragrance.

Welcome the Lord

And let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.

Can you believe that Jesus Himself sees choice fruits in you?

Recurring call

Rev 3:20 Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and him with me.

This is the Acceptable time. We welcome Jesus and delight in His appearance, just as he delights in us.

Let it be true, right now, for you and Jesus. Invite Him in. Let Him say,

He is Come into His Garden

S of S 5:1 I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice

Eat o friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, o beloved.

The issues are:

Are you satisfied with the way things are? The way you are?

Can you trust God in His love for you?

Can you trust Him to preserve you if you submit to his fiery trials?
Can you believe he'll turn rubble into a garden?

DAY 3 – SURVEYING THE WRECKAGE

The next day, a small army descended on the site. As if pre-arranged, within a span of 15 minutes, the Teller County Fire Investigator, Sears' insurance representative, the car insurance adjuster, two home insurance adjusters, two independent fire investigators, and two representatives of a fire restoration company had made their way down the driveway. One of the insurance adjuster presented me with a copy of my insurance coverage. Promises to restore! It was like a preacher holding out the Word with its promises of new life and restoration. "Yes! I'll take it! This house is burned! I'm traumatized! Let's have that new house - NOW! Next week at the latest." But it doesn't work that way. Before we could rebuild, a lot of things had to happen.

Exposure

That day snow from the previous day was melting, especially as the sun warmed the blackened ruins. The accumulations of more than twenty-four years of earthly things were emerging from under the snow. And it wasn't a pretty sight. Now a jumbled mess of skeletal remains with charred walls cluttered by smashed furniture, scattered clothes and fluttering pages of books began to appear. Scattered on the front sidewalk in front of the house, we walked over crumpled dress shirts and underwear. To ensure the fire was completely out, the firemen had to overturn appliances and break down walls. The kitchen was totally devastated with the oven on its side about ten feet from where it used to be. A two-foot mound of debris representing china, silverware, and kitchen utensils covered the area of the dining room and kitchen. The downstairs toilet stood suspended on its pipes. I spent the day watching the fire investigators sift through the rubble, listening to the adjusters assess value and attempt to define loss, answering questions about the "way things were" before the fire. As they poked through the ruins, placing value on what they could see and assigning scales of quality and assessment to every detail, like the house, I felt very exposed. Most of what I had invested in, with sentimentality and work, was now assessed as worthless.

Sometimes it takes a trial by fire to uncover what God means to remove. A key understanding in this process is:

- (1) He is Sovereign
- (2) He is loving (He is love)
- (3) I need to be transformed
our true motivations.

Prv 26:24 He who hates, disguises it with his lips, And lays up deceit within himself; 25 When he speaks kindly, do not believe him, For there are seven abominations in his heart; 26 Though his hatred is covered by deceit, His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.

Luk 8:17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.

ICor3:14 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is

But even in that, God was there. When I made my way up the ice and ash-caked stairs next time at the top of the stairs the wind had blown a chapter title page from a burned book. Its title: "Courage." What kind of courage would I need to acquire to face in the coming days? What would it take to face the challenges of rebuilding, the disappointments of unmet expectations and the poor reflections of my own character?

The Overwhelming Mess

In that first week, I felt I had to do something to begin the rebuilding process. For the sake of the allegory, look what happened to our house's main structure. It's destroyed, but still standing. The remains are a smelly dirty mess. In fact, it is a dangerous project to take it down and literally tons of rubbish must be removed to the dump. I was reminded of the rebuilding of the city Wall in Nehemiah:

NEH 4:2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he (Sanballat) said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?”

NEH 4:10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.”

I got our old yellow dump truck out of the snow and filled it up with a load of rubble. Only about 300 loads to go! What a pitiful effort. Then when I next decided to move the truck to dump it, the battery was dead!

But What About the Good Things?

Just How Much from the Old House can be salvaged? What about the good things from my old life? The talents? The memories?

PHI 3:13-14 But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Righteousness is as filthy rags

Isaiah 64:1-11 Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence-- **2** As fire burns brushwood, As fire causes water to boil—To make Your name known to Your adversaries, That the nations may tremble at Your presence! **3** When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, The mountains shook at Your presence. **4** For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him. **5** You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways. You are indeed angry, for we have sinned—In these ways we continue; And we need to be saved.

6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away. **7** And there is no one who calls on Your name, Who stirs himself up to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities. **8** But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand. **9** Do not be furious, O Lord, Nor remember iniquity forever; Indeed, please look—we all are Your people! **10** Your holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. **11** Our holy and beautiful temple, Where our fathers praised You, Is burned up with fire; And all our pleasant things are laid waste.

He makes all things new. The Holy Spirit is not in the business of reforming us or just fixing up what we have messed up, He's in the business of giving us an entirely new life.

JER 30:17 'I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD, 'because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares.' (18) “This is what the LORD says: “I will restore the fortunes of Jacob’s tents and have compassion on his dwellings; the city will be rebuilt on her ruins, and the palace will stand in its proper place.

The fire had destroyed the main structure of the house. We had to demolish the structure and clean up the rubble so that even the burned odors would be gone. But what about the foundation? From the first day, we suspected that the foundations, which had been built before 1972, might not meet the current Teller County building standards. However, the insurance adjuster wanted to save the main foundation and the surviving room, the Family Room. He in fact, may have been influenced by our expressed desire to hold on to that part of the structure, being that it seemed appropriate and sentimental that we should rebuild from the “Family Room.” Many of our memories of our life B.F. (Before Fire) had survived in photo albums and videos. However, as the initial shock wore off, we began to realize the plan that God had for us, that “The old has passed away - Behold, I make ALL things new” was His intention and we began to release that idea and began to become open to an entirely new house.

II Cor 5:17, “If anyone is in Christ, the old is gone, the new has come.” “Behold old things have passed away, behold I make all things new”

It began to dawn on us that the “latter house would (indeed) be greater than the former house.” If we wanted, we could keep our memories; they could be cleaned up, the smoky smell reduced, but they would be kept in an entirely new house.

GOD'S PROMISE TO REBUILD

Promises of Restoration

How far can we take this analogy? The writer of Hebrews takes it through generations of faith from living in tents to living in the holy city coming from heaven. Look what he says:

Heb11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; **10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.** **11** By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child ^{F51} when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. **12** Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. **13** These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, ^{F52} embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. **14** For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. **15** And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. **16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.**

So New Beginnings are beginning. God has a Plan – a whole new design for our house, different from the old one, better than before, built with relationships we never had known before and built on a solid foundation and part of an even greater community of houses – part of an eternal heavenly city!

Rebuilding Israel

JER 31:28 Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,” declares the LORD.

JER 31:3-14 The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. Now He says, (4) I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful. (5) Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit. (6) There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim, ‘Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.’”

(7) This is what the LORD says: “Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, ‘O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.’ (8) See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return. (9) They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel’s father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

(10) “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: ‘He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.’ (11) For the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they. (12) They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD—the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more. (13) Then maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. (14) I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and my people will be filled with my bounty,” declares the LORD.

Rebuilding the City of God

ISA 54:10-17 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (11) “O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. (12) I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. (13) All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children’s peace. (14) In righteousness you will be established: . . .

(16) “See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to work havoc;(17) no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the LORD.

Nehemiah as a Type

Nehemiah means Comforter. He is a type of the Holy Spirit. He is fully aware of the condition of our body, soul and spirit.

Neh1:2 that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews

who had escaped, (not been killed at the destruction) [we weren't wiped out immediately]

who had survived the captivity, (not been killed in exile) [though we're in bondage, we're still breathing!]

and concerning Jerusalem. (the present condition of the holy city) [He cares about us!]

3 And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach.

Great distress and reproach: When hard times come upon us, whether it be a consequence of our own actions or through external circumstances, we often become depressed. Depression usually leads to inaction and further deterioration.

The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.”

Walls broken down: Any one and anything can come in out. There are no defenses.

Gates burned with fire: Gates, serve to control ingress and egress if there are walls also serve to house the seats of judgment in ancient cities. We see in scripture examples of poor or unjust judges, but in this cases there is no judgment at all.

See what the Holy Spirit does in response to the condition of the City.

4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days

I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

5 And I said: “I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, **6** please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. **7** We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. **8** Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; ^{F4}**9** but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.’ **10** Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. **11** O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” For I was the king's cupbearer.

Holy Spirit intercedes

You are to be a Repairer of Breaches

Is 58:12 Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

EZE 22:30 “I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.

Neh1:3 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.” **4** So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Ezra9:9 For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

EVALUATING THE FOUNDATION

What is a Good Foundation?

I wasn't qualified, nor was the insurance adjuster, to make the judgment on the state of the foundations of my house.

1CO 3:11-15 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, (13) his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. (14) If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. (15) If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

In fact no one in Teller County was able or willing to evaluate the foundations. The insurance company had to get a Professional Engineer (P.E.) from Pueblo to come up here. So, after nine weeks, a P.E. visited the site and found that even the main foundation would indeed not meet the newer Teller County building standards. Just as in our lives as Christians, what was acceptable for me to build on twenty years ago is not acceptable today. So, following the P.E.'s written report, the decision was finally reached that the entire house would be razed, including all of the foundation.

DEMOLITION

Q: What Can/Should Be Saved?

A: Only that which IS eternal will BE eternal. Relationships that are built on soul ties or physical connections with no spiritual foundation will pass away. This applies at all levels: from business to sex to friendship to international treaties.

As is our family's habit, and is some of yours, at the end of a year, we try to assess what the past year was about and seek the Lord as to what His direction and vision for the new year is. At the end of 1997, we, and others of you, concluded that God was revealing foundations, showing us what was real and what was not. The word He gave through Lynn for the New Year was a hopeful one: New Beginnings. In response to the conviction that God was interested in re-establishing foundations, we began a Bible class to help new believers in doctrinal foundations. But, in this case, it seemed that God wasn't so interested in classroom teaching of doctrinal foundations as He was in relational foundations – relationship with Him and with each other.

Sometimes it takes a trauma of some sort to help us to see that. The trauma for our church came in the first week of January 1998, when a situation which the church had endured for many months was finally dealt with. Through this the church was shaken, relationships were tested and, and some of us found ourselves relating to the wall in Ezekiel 13:

Eze 13:10 When a flimsy wall is built, they daubed it with untempered mortar (KJV) or cover it with whitewash (NIV), (11) therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall. Rain will come in torrents, and I will send hailstones hurtling down, and violent winds will burst forth (12) When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, "Where is the whitewash you covered it with?" (13) "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury.(14) I will tear down the wall you have covered with whitewash and will level it to the ground so that its foundation will be laid bare.

Looking up the meaning of the word phrase "untempered mortar" in the KJV, or "whitewash" in the NIV I found that Strong's Concordance says it means "plaster" or "slime." What kind of stone structures withstand the test of time? If you visit ancient Greek or Roman ruins, it is obvious: Only the stones fitly joined together stay together. What God is saying is that instead of being fitly and solidly and tightly joined together, when we try to fill gaps in our relationship with either Him or each other with plaster or slime, He is bound to send the rain and wind and even spiritual hailstones to dissolve the plaster, knock down the structure and lay bare the

foundation. Early last year, for many of us, the foundation of our relationship with God and each other was being laid bare.

Remove ALL that isn't in God's Plan

2KI 23:7 He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes, which were in the temple of the LORD and where women did weaving for Asherah.

Consequence of building otherwise

Jer 22:13-14 Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness and his upper rooms (roof chambers) without justice, who uses his neighbor's services without pay and does not give him his wages; who says, "I will build myself a roomy house with spacious upper rooms, and cut out its windows, paneling it with cedar and painting it vermilion (bright red).

JOB 22:15-18 Will you keep to the old path that evil men have trod? They were carried off before their time, their foundations washed away by a flood. They said to God, 'Leave us alone! What can the Almighty do to us?' Yet it was He who filled their houses with good things, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.

Dan 4:30-33 Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance in thinking that he had built his empire.

MAL 1:4 Edom (The Flesh) may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD.

LAM 4:11 The LORD has given full vent to his wrath; he has poured out his fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations. (He started a fire in Zion that burned the city to its foundations. NLT)

EZE 13:14 I will tear down the wall you have covered with whitewash and will level it to the ground so that its foundation will be laid bare.

MIC 1:4-6 The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope. (5) All this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the house of Israel. What is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's high place? Is it not Jerusalem? (6) "Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations.

MAT 7:24-25 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (25) The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

MAT 7:26-27 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. (27) The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (also Luke 6:48-49)

Consequence of unfinished or breached building

God exposes poorly laid walls and foundations (His desire is that we be firmly established)

2SA 22:8 (PSA 18:7) "The earth trembled and quaked, the foundations of the heavens shook; they trembled because he was angry.

JOB 30:14 They advance as through a gaping breach; amid the ruins they come rolling in.

2SA 22:16 (PSA 18:15) The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of breath from his nostrils.

PSA 82:5 "They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

MIC 3:9-12 Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; (10) who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness. (11) Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us." (12) Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.

The Walls of Scripture

In God's plan, His walls are built in our lives to contain His glory. These are walls that express the relationship that God desires with Him – that we might be His habitation. Walls in scripture also represent our relationship with ourselves and each other. These are spiritual walls. Today we're going to look at some more scripture on walls – walls in houses and the walls in a city, particularly the City of God.

God's Promises

ISA 54:10-17 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

(11) "O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires.(12) I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.

(13) All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children's peace.(14) In righteousness you will be established:

We are part of a Spiritual City

Heb12: 22-24 But you have come to

Mount Zion and to the city of the living God,

the heavenly Jerusalem,

to an innumerable company of angels,

to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,

to God the Judge of all,

to the spirits of just men made perfect,

to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and

to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

That's what the writer of Hebrews saw 2000 years ago. Let's see what David saw 3000 years ago:

Psalms 122:

I A Song of Ascents. Of David

We're going up today, people. Let the Spirit of the Lord open your hearts and minds to His for you today

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

God wants us to be excited – glad when we are invited to worship with our brothers and sisters.

2 Our feet have been standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem! 3 Jerusalem is built As a city that is compact together, I looked that “compact together” in the Hebrew. It’s chabar (pron kabar) It means “have fellowship, join / knit together, be a companion, heap up!”

David is seeing a heavenly city where we truly have fellowship, are joined and knit together in love, are true companions to one another, where we’re heaped up! (I get the image of a gigantic Group Hug!!)

4 Where the tribes go up, The tribes of the Lord, To the Testimony of Israel, To give thanks to the name of the Lord. We’re going up today, a diverse little group here in Divide. We represent many tribes in the Lord. We’ve already been giving thanks to the Lord. I fully expect we will give more thanks before He is done with us today.

5 For thrones are set there for judgment, The thrones of the house of David.

Today we take Communion. For each of us communion has different meanings – based upon our various understandings of scripture, our various experiences and the emphasis or focus each occasion may bring. Today, we will have an opportunity to present ourselves before the Lord and His throne that we might see ourselves as we really are and see Him as He is. David is excited about these thrones. The idea of standing before a throne of judgment may be scary at first thought, but God’s judgments are righteous and true. When we are in Jesus, His judgments set us free.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you. 7 Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces.” 8 For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, “Peace be within you.” 9 Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good.

A thousand years after David, Paul echoed his passion for the church and its individual members as he wrote the love letters to the church in Phillipi, Rome, Colossae and Ephesus. The picture of this love was the Jew’s love of the city of Jerusalem:

Turn to Psalm 48 for God’s perspective of this city:

1 A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised In the city of our God, In His holy mountain. 2 Beautiful in elevation, The joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, The city of the great King.

3 God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge.

8 As we have heard, So we have seen In the city of the Lord of hosts, In the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah

9 We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness, In the midst of Your temple. 10 According to Your name, O God, So is Your praise to the ends of the earth;

Your right hand is full of righteousness. 11 Let Mount Zion rejoice, Let the daughters of Judah be glad, Because of Your judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, And go all around her. Count her towers; 13 Mark well her bulwarks; Consider her palaces; That you may tell it to the generation following. 14 For this is God, Our God forever and ever; He will be our guide Even to death.

God loves the city.

Isaiah 26: 1 In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: “We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks.

Wall Building a Process

But our building and restoration are a process. Today, in our lives, not all the walls are built by God and even some of those that were built by Him have been damaged.

Broken Down Walls

But walls are shown in a negative light in many scriptures. They are broken down. The clearest scripture on broken walls and the process of rebuilding is in Nehemiah where Nehemiah, a type of the Holy Spirit, leads the process of restoring the walls of Jerusalem after Nebuccanazer had destroyed them.

Flimsy Walls

But Randy also mentioned that men build walls that are not of God –

Eze 13:10 When a flimsy wall is built, they daubed it with untempered mortar (KJV) or cover it with whitewash (NIV), (11) therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall.

Tempered means hardened, solid. Untempered mortar is soft and won't support weight. It only fills in the gaps where solid rock isn't. White-wash is used to cover up discoloration, make things look nice. Where in the New Testament do we see mention of white-wash?

Mt 23:27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

Looking up them meaning of the word phrase “untempered mortar” in the KJV, or “whitewash” in the NIV I found that it means “plaster” or “slime.”

(11b) Rain will come in torrents, and I will send hailstones hurtling down, and violent winds will burst forth (12) When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, “Where is the whitewash you covered it with?”

Walls Represent Relationships

Remember that walls represent relationships. This wall could be interpreted two ways:

Our Selves

The stones that make it up are either components of our selves, the parts that make up our life that our designed to contain God, but since they don't really fit together, we cover the gaps up with whitewash. An example of that could be us here today, attending a worship service when last night we were living a life far from the presence of God.

Each Other

Another interpretation has to do with our relationships with each other. Each of us is a living stone. In God's plan, we are to fit together (compact) and form a glorious habitation for Him. Our walls are to be strong, but when there are gaps in our relationships and we try to fill those gaps with plaster or slime, He is bound to send the rain and wind and even spiritual hailstones to wash off the whitewash, dissolve the plaster, and even knock down the structure

(13) “Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury.(

What kind of stone structures withstand the test of time? If you visit ancient ruins, it is obvious: Only the stones fitly joined together stay together.

How do we become fitly joined together? Temple construction in the quarry.

1Ki 6:7 the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the **quarry**, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built.

The work of fitting us together is prepared in the quarry, in the circumstances and trials of this world, where we experience one another's imperfections and the Master knocks them off (not us)

14) I will tear down the wall you have covered with whitewash and will level it to the ground so that its foundations are laid bare.

MAL 1:4 Edom (The Flesh) may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD.

We humans often want to do things our way. We'll make reconciliations and alliances based upon weak compromise, when underneath, behind the scene, are hurts, anger, hatred. When we don't deal with these things, but cover them up with slime or whitewash, the relationship is bound to fail, the wall is bound to fall. So let's ensure that any walls that we build or rebuild are founded in God. All the relationships we have: at work, in recreation, at home – all must be founded in Him, rather than in our flesh's intentions, personal motives or ambitions.

Today, when we take communion, we can allow the Holy Spirit to lay bare the foundation of our relationships – first with the Lord Himself and then with our brothers and sisters and then with the world.

The Unclean House

Another instance of negative walls in scripture is in the walls of our house. In the past few years, there have been cases of mold and mildew making houses unlivable. People say even today that mold and mildew in a house are like leprosy. Leprosy, we know, is a type of sin, its work is to defile, to separate and to destroy.

Leviticus 14 - the Law of the Leper

This chapter describes the diagnosis and purification from leprosy. We're going to look at the law of the leprous house.

Lev 14:33-53

The entire passage significantly echoes the preceding passage in which a human being undergoes the same investigations and purifications for infectious skin diseases, and it anticipates the important regulations of Leviticus 16 concerning the Day of Atonement, the most important sacrifice of all, when sacrifice is made for the cleansing of the sins of all the people.

The point in the chapter is that the surface of the skin can demonstrate a deeper sickness underneath -- as can the surface of a house; both need to be cleansed of that deeper sickness as does the human heart of its sin.

Lev 14:34 When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession;

Notice that we're in Canaan, the Land of Promises, walking in the Kingdom of God and the leprosy appears in the house. It is supposed that even in Canaan itself, the land of promise, their houses might be infected with a leprosy. Though it was a holy land, this would not secure them from this plague, while the inhabitants were many of them so unholy. Thus a place and a name in the visible church will not secure wicked people from God's judgments.

14:35 the owner of the house must go and tell the priest, 'I have seen something that looks like mildew in my house.'" Or in KJV *It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house.*

Here's a clear case of open accountability. Revelation 5:10 says God has made us be a kingdom of priests and James 5:16 says confess your sins one to another that you might be healed. Sin, where that reigns in a house, is a plague there, as it is in a heart. This counts first in our responsibility for our individual house, our own hearts. The next next responsibility is for our families. We should be aware and afraid of the appearance of gross sin in our families, and put away whatever it is, far from our tabernacles.

Job 22:23. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored; If you remove wickedness far from your tent.

So when the priest then checks out the walls of the house and finds the plague in it, he waits for a week to see if it's spreading.

39 On the seventh day the priest shall return to inspect the house.

This is continued accountability – not the emotional – at the end-of-my-rope with no followup altar call, but an opportunity for a life style of repentance.

39b If the mildew has spread in the house, he is to order the contaminated stones be torn out and thrown into an unclean place outside the town.

41 He shall have the inside of the house scraped thoroughly, and the plaster that is scraped off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside the city. 42 They shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and take other plaster and plaster the house.

If the priest found that the leprosy had got into the house, he must try to cure it by taking out that part of the building that was infected, v. 40, 41. This was like cutting off a gangrened limb, for the preservation of the rest of the body. Corruption should be purged out in time, before it spread; for *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.*

48 If the priest comes and makes an inspection, and the disease has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean; the disease is healed.

If the taking out the infected stones cured the house, and the leprosy did not spread any further, then the house must be cleansed; not only aired, that it might be healthful, but purified from the ceremonial pollution, that it might be fit to be the habitation of an Israelite.

The houses of Israelites are said to be *dedicated* (Deu. 20:5), for they were a holy nation, and therefore they ought to keep their houses pure from all ceremonial pollutions, that they might be fit for the service of that God to whom they were devoted. We too are a holy nation, with our lives dedicated and need to be pure.

So we reach the ceremony God gave them for purification and atonement. Remember that all these ceremonies, sacrifices and processes in the O.T. pointed to their fulfillment in Christ. So let the Holy Spirit show you how this applies today in your life.

49 For the cleansing of the house he shall take two birds, with cedarwood and crimson yarn and hyssop, 50 and shall slaughter one of the birds over running water in an earthen vessel, 51 and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the crimson yarn, along with the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times.

Let's take these verses bit by bit

49 For the cleansing of the house he shall take

two birds, (both innocent, beautiful heavenly creatures)

with cedarwood (aromatic wood, used to build the holy furniture in the Tabernacle and the Temple) and

crimson yarn (is that the same picture of salvation in the middle of judgment like when Rahab marked her house before Jericho's walls fell?) and

hyssop,

FIRST COMMUNION IN EGYPT, THE PASSOVER

Exodus 12:22

And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin (that was the blood of the lamb), and strike the lintel and the two doorposts (of your house) with the blood that is in the basin.

God ordained that since the life is in the blood, blood sacrifice must be made for the atonement of sin. The blood of bulls, sheep, goats and, as in this case, birds was a faith picture of the ultimate sacrifice Jesus was to become.

Heb 9:11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. (12) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

9:13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, (14) how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

50 and

shall slaughter one of the birds over running water (We slaughter the bird over running water, also translated living water) in an earthen vessel,

51 and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the crimson yarn, along with the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times.

52 Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedarwood and hyssop and crimson yarn;

Communion

Two levels God can deal with us today:

Individual and Corporate. For the individual,

Individual

I Cor 11:28 let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

Then in the weak places along the wall or if you believe that God has knocked down a white-washed wall, repent from your efforts to rebuild in fleshly power or with fleshly motives.

And let the Holy Spirit examine our walls for the leprous plague. If we

Corporate

Allow the Holy Spirit to let us back to the quarry – where we will tolerate sparks flying, dust and the breaking off of our uneven edges.

Communion; Today we will administer it by Head of Family. If HOF isn't present, please join a with other singles.

This is my blood shed for you

ICor11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; ^{F33} this is My body which is broken ^{F34} for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

Closing your eyes, I want you to imagine the process of dedicating and cleansing your house that had been plagued:

shall slaughter one of the birds over running water in an earthen vessel,

See the brutal death of an innocent beautiful bird, a creature of the heavenlies, being consigned to an earthen vessel – and knowing that by the Holy Spirit, it was dying for you

51 and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the crimson yarn, along with the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times.

52 Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedarwood and hyssop and crimson yarn;

53 and he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field; so he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.

He who the Son has set free is free indeed!!

In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: “We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls

Removing Multiple Foundations

Then, when the house was demolished and they began to pull the foundations, they discovered another foundation under the old one.

How many of us have built our lives with multiple foundations? Good Principles and traditions from our parents, or philosophies picked up from school or friends? Our in our churches – what is real in our foundational relationships and what is just religious fluff? No structure from the old life. No life from the old life. God loves us. He wants his house built upon the Rock so when the storms come we’re not blown away.

If your house is not built on the Rock (who Christ is IN YOU), your house will and should fall. You don’t want to be like the first two little pigs: comfortable and stupid in your house of straw or sticks, just waiting for the Big Bad Wolf to huff and puff. Prepare to build it right, NOW!

Cleansing the Land

What a process of release! First the house in general, then the Family Room, then part of the foundation, then the whole foundation! At least we have the land!

No wait! Here comes another engineer. What? He’s testing the soil, taking core samples. The very land must be cleansed – the ashes, the debris, the chemicals from the fire. The soul ties to the past released. Repentance is the first component resting on the land. We (our land) is cursed by the blood of Abel – it cries out for judgment, it joins the accuser of the brethren

Gen 4:10 And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.

UNTIL we receive the fundamental fact of forgiveness worked by the blood of Jesus poured out on us (the earth) at Calvary.

Put Enemies Down – Secure the earth (the land)

1KI 5:3 “You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD put his enemies under his feet.

We are Heirs to God, No longer Subject to the Elemental Spirits

The Hayman Fire in June 2002 brought many in the church to a new awareness of the power the destroyer can take with un-dealt with sin: anger, bitterness, unforgiveness.

Jas 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

The Hayman Fire also began to teach us our authority. Many firefighters speak of natural fires as “living, breathing creatures,” and attribute a malevolent intelligence to their destructive fury. In most primitive cultures, fire is given an animistic attribute – the spirit of the fire. If you’ve seen a tornado or a wildfire or a fire tornado within a wildfire, you could easily make that connection.

Gal4:1 My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; **2** but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. **3 So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world.**

Spirits of alcohol, drugs, lust, poverty, death, disease, insanity, destruction

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. 6 And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Jesus came to destroy the works of the evil one

1Jn8:8b For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Luke 4:18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

All creation waiting for manifestation of the sons of God

Rom8:14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. **15** For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” **16** it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. **18** I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. **19** For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; **20** for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; **21** because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. **22** We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; **23** and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. **24** For in this hope we were saved.

We have become sons to set the captives free

Young men overcome the evil one

1Jo 2:13 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.

2:14 I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

5: 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Overcoming the Evil One

Is 41:16 “See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to work havoc;(17) no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the LORD.

He that overcomes

Re 2:7 -

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ‘

Re 2:11 -

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ‘

Re 2:17 -

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who **overcomes** I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ‘

Re 2:26 -

And he who **overcomes**, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

Re 3:5 -

He who **overcomes** shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Re 3:12 -

He who **overcomes**, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

Re 3:21 -

To him who **overcomes** I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Re 21:7 -

He who **overcomes** shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

How do we overcome?

Rev 12:10 “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. **11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.**

Overcame by

the Blood of the Lamb,

The Destroyer cannot touch you

Ex 12:23 For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.

Covenant

Word of their testimony

high praises of God

Ps 149: 1 Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, And His praise in the assembly of saints. **2** Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. **3** Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp. **4** For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation. **5** Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, **7** To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples; **8** To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; **9** To execute on them the written judgment—This honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord!

They loved not their lives unto death

Hard to hurt a dead man

Mt 16:24 - Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Mr 8:34 - When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Lu 9:23 - Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

We understand that repentance is a turning from a life of sin and to God, but do we really understand the full implication of that?

Rom 14:23 "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

What I define as good in my life, as well as the bad, needs to be taken to the altar, my whole life a living sacrifice presented to God, all of me identified with Jesus on the cross.

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Build an altar for sacrifices

Consider that altars preceded Solomon's Temple

Gen 22:1-2

Gen22:1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." **2** He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, ^{R523} and offer him there as a burnt ^{R524} offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." **3** So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. **4** On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. **5** Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." **6** Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid ^{R525} it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. **7** Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb ^{R526} for the burnt offering?" **8** Abraham said, "God will provide ^{F372} for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. **9** Then they came to the ^{R527} place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the ^{R528} altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid ^{R529} him on the altar, on top of the wood. **10** Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." **12** He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." **13** Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind {him} a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. **14** Abraham called the name of that place The ^{F374} LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

IChron 21:18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. **19** So David went up at the word of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD. **20** Now Ornan turned back and saw the angel, and his four sons {who were} with him hid themselves. And Ornan was threshing wheat. **21** As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out from the threshing floor and prostrated himself before David with his face to the ground. **22** Then David said to Ornan, “Give me the site of {this} threshing floor, that I may build on it an altar to the LORD; for the full price you shall give it to me, that the plague may be restrained from the people.” **23** Ornan said to David, “Take {it} for yourself; and let my lord the king do what is good in his sight. See, I will give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for wood and the wheat for the grain offering; I will give {it} all.” **24** But King David said to Ornan, “No, but I will surely buy {it} for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, or offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing.”

IIChron3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

EZR 3:3 Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices.

Build it with stones of testimony.

Testimony ~ what God has done for me. Rev 12:10-11 He was cast down (overcame him) by the blood of Lamb, the Word of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto death.

DEU 27:2-8 When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. (3) Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. (4) And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I command you today, and coat them with plaster. (5) Build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool upon them. (6) Build the altar of the LORD your God with fieldstones and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. (7) Sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God. (8) And you shall write very clearly all the words of this law on these stones you have set up.”

No other gods - Jesus is Lord

Don't think you can build an altar; then continue to worship sexual sins right next to it.

EXO 20:22 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites this: ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: (23) Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.

DEU 16:21 Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the LORD your God,

ICO 6:15-19 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! (16) Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” (17) But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. (18) Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. (19) Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

(24) “Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle.

Present your bodies living sacrifices. We bring the sacrifice of praise.

(24b) Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you.

If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me.

(25) *If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it.*

Assemble yourselves at the altar

“just as you are,” field stones, uncut, unworked.

Offer sacrifice of praise and gratitude

The next months were consumed with preparations for rebuilding. Three months were taken just getting the old house demolished, which involved removing the old foundations and much bureaucracy. More time was taken finding and contracting an architect, then finding and contracting a builder and then getting on the builder’s schedule. All through this my family and I were continually challenged with keeping our eyes on the Lord and trust in Him, believe His Sovereignty, provision and constant care for us. My weakness is a desire to trust in individuals or institutions instead of Him alone. And when they failed, I would have to deal with unforgiveness, anger and bitterness.

By the time Thanksgiving 1998 had arrived, no building progress had been made. Only a large hole surrounded by mounds of frozen dirt covered by a layer of snow were physical evidence of a future home. I began to accumulate grounds for grumbling and revived a list of complaints against people and institutions that were “letting us down.”

Mixing metaphors, we were into the 8th month A.F., and I was beginning to relate to the misery of being pregnant with a “new beginning.”

On Thanksgiving Eve, we participated in joint church service with a sister church in Divide. The guest speaker was a young pastor from Woodland Park. His testimony about a childhood Thanksgiving stuck in my heart. He shared how his new step-mother had restrained the family from diving into the Thanksgiving feast until they had first given thanks. The thanks she required they give was focused and specific. She asked them to consider the one thing each had to be thankful for in the entire past year. . .not the usual “I’m grateful for this food, our family, the house and the dog,” but the one thing of the whole year that you are most thankful for.

On Thanksgiving, prior to our diving into the Thanksgiving dinner, I felt compelled to challenge myself and family with the same question, “To what in the last year do I have to most thankful?” Somewhat surprisingly, each of us found ourself being thankful for The Fire. Our reasons ranged from gratitude in bringing us closer together to God and as a family to thankfulness for seeing in new ways God’s faithfulness and hand of provision. Later I was reminded of the scripture in Ezra

EZR 3:6 On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD’S temple had not yet been laid.

It was almost that last day of the eighth month, but I hoped it wasn’t too late to bring a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. And Paul’s words, repeated by Will Brown the first week after The Fire, came again: “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!” As a friend and experienced contractor, Will had taken the time to sit down with Lynn and I and outline the excruciating process that it was going to take to recover the house. He used several pages of legal pad to describe the steps of demolition, contractor bidding and all. But at the bottom of all this he wrote, “Rejoice” and exhorted us to rejoice through the whole process. It was good to be reminded again.

Rom12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship. **2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Heb 13:10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. **11** For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest {as an offering} for sin, are burned outside the camp. **12** Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. **13** So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. **14** For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking {the city} which is to come. **15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.**

THE RE-BUILDING PROCESS

Our Building Focus vs His Building Focus

What is He building or rebuilding now, His plans, vs our plans and finally, some of the process of building, especially preparations for it?

The house burning and its process of restoration has been an allegory somewhat supported by scriptural allegories. Remember that allegories are never altogether all inclusive for each person at the same time; some images and the application of some scripture may apply to me and not to you today. But whatever, the scriptures we read today are useful for

2TI 3:16 for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

HEB 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

1CO 14:3 But everyone who prophesies (here applying def as forth telling/preaching/teaching God's Word vs fore-telling) speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

The picture of building is a type. God's not interested in physical buildings or even in institutions or organizations. He cares about relationships. The relationship first with Him and then, by it, with each other. He desires to build a relationship in which He will live.

Mat 6:33 Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.

HAG 1:4-9 "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"(5) Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways.(6) You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." (7) This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. (8)Go up into the mountains (other kingdoms)and bring down timber (evangelism: I see men like trees) and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. (9) "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.

PSA 127:1 Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.

What is God building / rebuilding now?

You are not your own. You are bought with a price. You cannot, nor do you really want to build independently from God, away from the life of His people.

I Cor 6:19 Or do you **not** know that **your** body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are **not your own**?

A Habitation, Dwelling Place for Himself: Buildings and building processes described in Scripture: Tabernacle of Moses, Tabernacle of David, Temple, City

ACT 7:48-49 "The Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: "'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be?"

Temple - You are the Temple

1CO 3:16-17 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

JOH 2:19-21 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body. (MAR 14:58; Mark 15:29, Mat 27:40 “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.’”)

The New Jerusalem: City Walls, Gates, Palaces, Towers, etc

HEB 11:10 For he (Abraham) was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

HEB 13:14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

HEB 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, (23) to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

What is The City Like?

We are Living Stones set together in a Living City.

1PE 2:4-5 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Rev 21:9-27 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” (10) And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. (11) It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. (NIV)

Psalms 48 and 87 also describe The City. Remember that we each are the components. Consider the brothers and sisters you known who fit these descriptions: citadels, towers, ramparts, palaces, gates, fountains, etc.

PSA 48:1 A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain.(2) It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King.(3) God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.

PSA 48:8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD Almighty, in the city of our God: God makes her secure forever. Selah (9) Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love. (10) Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness. (11) Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments. (12) Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, (13) consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation. (14) For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end. (NIV)

PSA 87:1 Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm. A song. He has set his foundation on the holy mountain; (2) the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. (3) Glorious things are said of you, O city of God: Selah

PSA 87:5 Indeed, of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her.” (6) The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: “This one was born in Zion.” Selah (7) As they make music they will sing, “All my fountains are in you.” (NIV)

God Himself commissions the building

In Teller County, the authority to build any structure, even to remodel an existing structure rests, with the Teller County Building Department. We all know that if we don't submit to its rules and regulations, we become subject to an enthusiastic enforcement of penalties, delays or even condemnation of our building efforts. When we try to build without a permit, they can even force us to tear down whatever we're building. Or when we try

to build something that doesn't conform to County Building Code, either by ignorance or to cut corners to save money and effort, we can get into an adversarial relationship with the Building Inspectors.

Ideally, the Building Department knows what exactly what we are doing and we know exactly what is expected of us, and both the Building Department and we, with our architect, contractor and all the workers are in one accord with the implementation of the plans.

In the Kingdom, the authority to build rests with the Father,

2SA 7:11-13 (1 Ch 17:10-12) . . . “The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: (12) When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

1Chron28:9 “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever. **10** “Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be courageous and act.”

1Chron 28:11 Then David gave to his son Solomon the plan of the porch {of the temple,} its buildings, its storehouses, its upper rooms, its inner rooms and the room for the mercy seat; **12** and the plan of all that he had in mind,

EZR 6:3 In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem: Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid.

ISA 44:28 who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’

And He will build it (Master Builder)

ZEC 6:12-13 Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’

PSA 127:1 Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.

MAT 16:18 . . . on this rock (“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God”), I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not withstand it.

COL 1:26-27 “ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.(27) To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

GOD HAS THE PLANS

1Chron28: 11 Then David gave to his son Solomon the plan of the porch {of the temple,} its buildings, its storehouses, its upper rooms, its inner rooms and the room for the mercy seat; **12** and the plan of all that he had in mind,

God has a plan for every detail of our lives.

He has specific plans for our life individually and corporately that extends to before we were born:

EPH 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

God is interested in your personal plans, your family plans, what you do at work, at school. The house that He is building is made up of relationships, not just relationships in the “religious” context, but in all contexts. Just as a “custom” built home has many features the same as other homes, it has totally unique features custom-built for the owner-occupants. So it is with each of us, unique personalities for God’s life to live in.

Relate

school relationship building: peer pressure, “popularity” vs those whom God wants us to relate to.

Home: what is more important to God? Whether the homework is done or the house is clean or the screen door is fixed or whether those tasks are accomplished on the foundation of the Kingdom of God, His love and thereby our love and respect for one another?

Work: Many of us are task oriented at work. The world provides a job description; we get the job and by the world’s standards we are expected to perform within those parameters. What’s important? It’s the relationships, not the physical product.

Importance of *tabnit*, The ‘Plan’

God has a plan for your life that extends to before you were born:

HEB 8:5 They (Old Covenant priests) serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

The key to the Tabernacle’s (or Mishkan’s) as well as the Temple’s secrets is in the (floor) plan and layout of its furnishings. The “plan” or “pattern” (Heb., *tabnit*) of the structures and their furniture is mentioned in

I Chr. 28:11, 12,18,19 and Ex. 25:9, 39, 40. *Tabnit* is also translated as *design, structure, figure, form, likeness, and shape*. The Mishkan was the precursor of the Temple. Thus, in Dt. 4:16-18 the Israelites are forbidden making any likeness, form, or figure of a human or beast for worship. In Ezk. 8:10 the prophet sees repulsive forms or figures of creeping beasts, however in 8:3 he is lifted up by the form or figure of God’s hand, or an angel’s (see also 10:8). In Ps. 144:12 sons and daughters are compared to choice cut stones giving shape or form to a palace.

Tabnit generally refers to the *form* of something. King David received Divine inspiration for the *form*, i.e., plan or pattern of the Temple. And before him, at Sinai, Moses heard God’s verbal instructions for the form of the Mishkan. *Tabnit* is related to *banah* which means *to build* a structure or house—or to raise children, since a “house” may also refer to a family. Thus, in Ru. 4:11 Rachel and Leah, the two wives of *Jacob* (later renamed *Israel*), are called the “builders” of the House of Israel. This is how *tabnit* directly and indirectly relates to buildings, ordinary houses, the House of God (i.e., the Temple), and humans—and their structure, form or figure.

God wants Us to Know His Plans

EPH 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (8) that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.(9) and he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, (10) to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (11) In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

Jn15:15 No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you.

God's plan, the mystery of His will, is all-encompassing: to bring ALL things in heaven and earth together under Christ means ALL things. He established the pattern of detail when He provided specifications for the Tabernacle of Moses, and the Temple of Solomon and Ezekiel's revelation of The Heavenly Temple. It's the same for us. We are the true tabernacle. We are the temple of the Most High. Remember ...

HEB 8:5 They (Old Covenant priests) serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

PSA 33:10-11 . . . the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

But We Have Our Own Plans

But often, we mix our plans with those of the Lord and head off in our own directions. We'll build monuments to past revelations, we'll ask Him to bless our plans, while we confine to a little room of our own understanding, or we'll build a huge empire to reflect our own ego or we'll just build for the sake of building. (Winchester Mystery House)

ISA 30:1 "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin;

JER 18:12 But they will reply, 'It's no use. We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart.'"

PRO 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

PRO 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails.

His Plan Needs to be Our Plan

PRO 16:3 Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

Build properly with specifications and blueprints

If we were to see the detail of his blueprints, there would be absolutely NO questions. So where can we find the detail?

1CH 28:11-12 Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. (12) He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.

Remember, that the Tabernacle is us, and the Temple is us, both individually and corporately and that its plans are complete and detailed by the hand of the Lord.

1Chron28:19 All this, [said David], have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of Jehovah, even all the works of this pattern.

God's Plan is for Good

JER 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

2CH 2:5 "The temple I am going to build will be great, because our God is greater than all other gods.

ROM 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (NIV)

James 5:10 We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. Job is an example of a man who endured patiently. From his experience we see how the Lord's plan finally ended in good, for He is full of tenderness and mercy. (NLT)

Persevere – it will be completed.

God is warning us that the building process will not be a snap – there will be resistance, trials and tribulations. However, it is God's building; He'll provide the means and the time -- it will be finished.

20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed; for Jehovah God, even my God, is with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah be finished.

God will provide resources

God brings His servants into our lives from all corners of the earth, with all kinds of skills necessary for our building. Do you have any idea what kind of skills it took to create the machines and all their parts that work the excavation of a foundation? Why do you think little boys are so fascinated by big machinery? What about the little things? How many people are involved in making a hinge, a light switch, a plumbing fixture? It's amazing to think that thousands have been involved in the minutest detail. And each is necessary. Consider how much more detailed and complex your soul is than a simple house!

21 And, behold, there are the courses of the priests and the Levites, for all the service of the house of God: and there shall be with thee in all manner of work every willing man that hath skill, for any manner of service: also the captains and all the people will be wholly at thy commandment.

CAN I TRUST THE ARCHITECT - MASTER BUILDER?

Ideally, prior to building a home, the architect gets to know you and in the process, gains insight about you and your lifestyle. He uses this knowledge to accommodate the design to enhance your life at home. For example, if you are prone to hospitality, community rooms and connections between them will encourage the free flow of social life. Design based upon knowledge of you and your family, applies in every part of the house, to kitchen layout, closet configurations, bedrooms, even bathrooms. His purposes throughout scripture are revealed.

Relationship with God is The Key

PRO 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; (6) in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths.

The word translated “acknowledge” is worth digging into. The Hebrew *Yada* is most often translated “know” in the Old Testament. - to ascertain by seeing; to make oneself known, become known, be known. According to language scholars, God wants us to understand Him and His plans by seeing in faith with our hearts.

Marriage as the Ultimate Building Plan

There is a partnership, ultimately expressed in the relationship of the Bride and Bridegroom. God is preparing His bride for the Ultimate Relationship.

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Rev21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. **2** Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

However, we have forgotten who we are. Satan has clouded our minds to our calling and destiny. We’re like Cinderella covered in soot and grime, slaving under the cruel rule of her step-mother and step-sisters, unaware that our Prince Charming is waiting for us to appear “spotless and without blemish.”

Jer2:32 Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

The Unveiling

Yada also expresses the most intimate form of relationship (*knowing*). This includes, but is far beyond intellectual knowing or physical “knowing.” Adam “knew” his wife. Some Hebrew scholars say that the word, besides the obvious uncovering of the body, suggests the unveiling of the bride’s face on the wedding night. In that culture, that may have been the first time the bridegroom had really seen her.

II Cor3:14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. **15** But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. **16** *Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, **20** *by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,* **21** and having a High Priest over the house of

God, **22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

God wants us to see ourselves as we really are in Him, so that we are prepared to see Him and be seen by Him at His coming.

ICor13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

1Jo 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Hosea's Allegory of God's Faithfulness

The book of Hosea is a clear picture of God's desire to know us and be known by Him. In it, Hosea is instructed to marry a prostitute to demonstrate God's persistence in His love and our persistence in unfaithfulness.

Hosea1: 2 When the LORD first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, he said to him, "Go and marry a prostitute, so some of her children will be born to you from other men. This will illustrate the way my people have been untrue to me, openly committing adultery against the LORD by worshiping other gods." **(3)** So Hosea married Gomer, (meaning "burning coal") the daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son.

Prv6:16 There are six things the LORD hates – no, seven things he detests: **17** haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, **18** a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, **19** a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord among brothers.

20 My son, obey your father's commands, and don't neglect your mother's teaching. **21** Keep their words always in your heart. Tie them around your neck. **22** Wherever you walk, their counsel can lead you. When you sleep, they will protect you. When you wake up in the morning, they will advise you. **23** For these commands and this teaching are a lamp to light the way ahead of you. The correction of discipline is the way to life. **24** These commands and this teaching will keep you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of an adulterous woman. **25** Don't lust for her beauty. Don't let her coyness seduce you. **26** For a prostitute will bring you to poverty, and sleeping with another man's wife may cost you your very life. **27** Can a man scoop fire into his lap and not be burned?

(There's Gomer, the burning coal.)

28 Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet? **29** So it is with the man who sleeps with another man's wife. He who embraces her will not go unpunished. **30** Excuses might be found for a thief who steals because he is starving. **31** But if he is caught, he will be fined seven times as much as he stole, even if it means selling everything in his house to pay it back. **32** But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul.

Foundational to Hosea's message and teaching about God are his marriage to Gomer and her departure after the birth of three children. The opening surprise of the book is that God initiated Hosea's marriage to Gomer; but the greater, unexpected surprise is that he tells Hosea to find his adulterous wife, bring her back, and love her again.

Hosea3:1 Then the LORD said to me, "Go and get your wife again. Bring her back to you and love her, even though she loves adultery. For the LORD still loves Israel even though the people have turned to other gods, offering them choice gifts

Hosea's personal tragedy can speak to us at the deepest level, moving us emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Hosea's theology brings together an awareness of God as holy (11:9, 12) and sovereign (12:5) with an appreciation for his actions as husband (2:16) and parent (11:1-4) toward his people. As we integrate all these relationships into His role as Architect and Master Builder of our lives, we can experience His peace and joy in a cooperative building process. So let's take a look at relationships God offers us:

Holy and Sovereign

In His Sovereignty and holiness, as King of all creation, with infinite power and might, He is mercy.

Hosea 11:8 “Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah and Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. **9** No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy. **10** “For someday the people will follow the LORD. I will roar like a lion, and my people will return trembling from the west.

Husband

Our God is a God of forgiveness and restoration. He works ALL things together for good for those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. What He demonstrates through the story of Hosea and Gomer, He means to make real in us:

Hosea2:14 “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her. **15** I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. **16** “And it shall be, in that day,” Says the Lord, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband.’ And no longer call Me ‘My Master,’ **17** For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more. **18** In that day I will make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air, And with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely. **19** “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; **20** I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the Lord. **21** “It shall come to pass in that day That I will answer,” says the Lord; “I will answer the heavens, And they shall answer the earth. **22** The earth shall answer With grain, With new wine, And with oil; They shall answer Jezreel. ^{F9}**23** Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’ “

New Living Translation

Hosea2:14 “But then I will win her back once again. I will lead her out into the desert and speak tenderly to her there. **15** I will return her vineyards to her and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope. She will give herself to me there, as she did long ago when she was young, when I freed her from her captivity in Egypt. **16** “In that coming day,” says the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’ instead of ‘my master.’ **17** O Israel, I will cause you to forget your images of Baal; even their names will no longer be spoken. **18** At that time I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and the birds and the animals that scurry along the ground so that they will not harm you. I will remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, so you can live unafraid in peace and safety. **19** I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. **20** I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as LORD. **21** “In that day,” says the LORD, “I will answer the pleading of the sky for clouds, which will pour down water on the earth in answer to its cries for rain. **22** Then the earth will answer the thirsty cries of the grain, the grapes, and the olive trees for moisture. And the whole grand chorus will sing together, ‘Jezreel’ – ‘God plants!’ **23** “At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself! I will show love to those I called ‘Not loved.’ And to those I called ‘Not my people,’ I will say, ‘Now you are my people.’ Then they will reply, ‘You are our God!’”

Father of a Child

Many of us have poor experiences with our earthly fathers and it’s natural to transfer those poor relationships to our Father in Heaven.

Hosea 11:1 “When Israel was a child, I loved him as a son, and I called my son out of Egypt. **2** But the more I called to him, the more he rebelled, offering sacrifices to the images of Baal and burning incense to idols. **3** It was I who taught Israel how to walk, leading him along by the hand. But he doesn’t know or even care that it was I who took care of him. **4** I led Israel along with my ropes of kindness and love. I lifted the yoke from his neck, and I myself stooped to feed him.

God Will Heal Us

In our rebellion, we have become fatherless, but again, God reaches out to us.

Hosea14:1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for your sins have brought you down. **2** Bring your petitions, and return to the LORD. Say to him, “Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you the sacrifice of praise. **3** Assyria cannot save us, nor can our strength in battle. Never again will we call the idols we have made ‘our gods.’ No, in you alone do the orphans find mercy.”

4 The LORD says, “Then I will heal you of your idolatry and faithlessness, and my love will know no bounds, for my anger will be gone forever! **5** I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. It will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. **6** Its branches will spread out like those of beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedar forests of Lebanon. **7** My people will return again to the safety of their land. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon.

HOS 13:4 “But I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge (know - KJV) no God but me, no Savior except me.

HOS 6:3 Let us acknowledge (**know - KJV**) the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge (know - KJV) him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.”

Trust is the Foundation of the Relationship

Prv 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart...In all your ways acknowledge (know) Him and He will direct your paths

When you have confidence in someone’s character, even when something they do or ask you to do is strange or you can’t understand it, because you trust them, you proceed. When Abraham took Isaac to the mountain as a sacrifice, he trusted God and His plans and his faith was counted to him as righteousness.

We are not passive in this process. Although we are being built into a habitation for God, we are also co-workers with Him in the process. It’s a house for us AND a house for Him.

1CH 28:9-12 “And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge (know - KJV) the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.

1 Corinthians 3:9. 9 For we are God’s fellow-workers: ye are God’s husbandry, God’s building.

THE PLAN OF THE TEMPLE

1CH 28:10 Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work.”
(11) Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. (12) He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.

Ezekiel 40-43 describes a heavenly temple in great detail. Ezekiel says

EZE 40:2-4 In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain (kingdom of God), on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. (3) He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. (4) The man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here.

And in more than 70 verses, Ezekiel then describes in detail specifications and measurements of walls, gateways, foyers, alcoves, stairways, windows, courtyards, rooms, walkways and pavements, even decorations.

Holiness is the Basic Law of the Temple

EZE 43:7 And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places.

Is 26:13 O LORD our God, others have ruled us, but we worship you alone.

Ez 43:8 When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. **9** Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

Ez43:10-11 “Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider the plan, (11) and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations.

EZE 43:12 “This is the (basic) law of the temple: (absolute holiness). All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be most holy. Such is the (primary) law of the temple.

In one way, by describing the temple as having rooms, walkways, courtyards and compartments surrounding it, God grants that our lives are indeed compartmentalized. Our tendency is to allow those compartments to be set aside for purposes other than God’s.

Integrity

Integrity means oneness. A man of integrity has one ruler in his life, in every aspect, in all compartments whether it work-life, sports-life, sex-life, church-life or entertainment. Without singular rule from one head, a person will behave as a spastic, unable to accomplish his life’s purpose in any complete way.

PSA 86:11 Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

Knowing God in Thought Life

This takes a very practical form in our lives. I first witnessed this working with my friend David Trotter. God had gifted him with a very quick mind. Consequently, in his job as a software engineer, he could cruise along

on those God-given abilities, merrily creating programs, efficiently and quickly, with no mind to consciously acknowledging the Lord in that aspect of his life. Then he ran into a problem. For days he struggled with it, until finally, at the end of his rope, he asked the Lord for help. Moments later, an altogether new solution occurred to him and the problem was solved.

Where did that inspiration come from? Was it injected from some faraway place in heaven? No, it came from within David's mind. God's inspiration came through the thoughts of David. Paul is so presumptuous of God's intention for us to become even a part of God's thoughts that he says in

1CO 2:16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

This has happened to me in management. Not everyone I work for or who works for me knows the Lord. But they all can understand the principle of caring more about them and their relationships than the tasks we are assigned.

It's the application of Mat 6:33: Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and ALL these things shall be added unto you.

When we include God in all our life's plans and activities, or rather, when we allows ourselves to be included in His plans and activities, we can say "Ain't it fun?!"

PREPARATION OF THE FOUNDATION

Devote your heart and soul to seeking God

1CH 22:19 Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the LORD God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the LORD.”

Get Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge

PRO 24:3-4 **3** Through wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established; **4** By knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches.

Wisdom

PRO 3:19 By wisdom the LORD laid the earth’s foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place;

PRO 8:10-9: Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

PRO 8:12 “I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion.

PRO 8:22-31 “The LORD brought me (Wisdom) forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world.

I was there

when he set the heavens in place,

when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,

when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command,

and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.

Fear of the Lord Beginning of Wisdom

PSA 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

PRO 9:10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

PSA 34:11 Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

PRO 8:13-17 To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power. By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth. I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full.

2CH 17:10 The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not make war with Jehoshaphat.

2CH 19:9 He gave them these orders: “You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the LORD.

JOB 28:28 And he said to man, ‘The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.’”

PSA 19:9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

PRO 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,

PRO 10:27 The fear of the LORD adds length to life

PRO 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.

PRO 15:33 The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

PRO 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.

PRO 22:4 Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

PRO 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.

ISA 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—(3) and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;

ISA 33:6 He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

ACT 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

PRO 2:5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Knowledge

Understanding

Count the cost

Jesus said,

LUK 14:28-30 “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

In the process of restoration of our destroyed house, counting the cost became a significant chore. We solicited several contractors to scope the cost to rebuild our old home and soon concluded that our insurance coverage was significantly less than what it would cost to rebuild that house. God’s promise from the day of the fire continued to echo in my mind, however, so we proceeded to plan and design a similar house for approximately the same cost as the old one.

Bring a Sacrifice

Therefore, to finish this work, there was a price for us to pay – we would have to bring a sacrifice.

1Ch 29:5 - The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?

I Chron 29:5 who then is willing to consecrate his service—*Hebrew*, “fill his hand”; that is, make an offering (Exodus 32:29, Leviticus 8:33, 1 Kings 13:33). The meaning is, that whoever would contribute voluntarily, as he had done, would be offering a freewill offering to the Lord. It was a sacrifice which every one of them could make, and in presenting which the offerer himself would be the priest. David, in asking freewill offerings for the temple, imitated the conduct of Moses in reference to the tabernacle (Exodus 25:1-8).

GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF LAYING FOUNDATIONS

JOB 38:4-14 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'? "Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment.

PSA 102:25 In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

PSA 104:5 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.

PRO 8:29 when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

ISA 48:13 My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.

ISA 51:13 the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. . .

ISA 51:16 ...I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who say to Zion, 'You are my people.'"

ZEC 12:1 The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him,

HEB 1:10 "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Finally, after a few more delays, at nine months to the day, on December 31st, 1998, the foundation was poured. To me this was the visible fulfillment of the Word of the Lord to Lynn, for us and many of our friends, that 1998 was to be a year of New Beginnings. For us, it was a real event, a time to rejoice in God's faithfulness and impeccable timing. We were drawn to Ezra 3, where Ezra describes the rebuilding of the Temple foundation.

Rejoice in the Lord (as throughout process)

EZR 3:10-11 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

The next two verses made more sense to us too:

EZR 3:12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.

EZR 3:13 No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

When you look at a house's foundation, it looks so small. It seems impossible that that room is really 10x14 . But as it grows upward, it also takes on dimensions that grow with it. But that brings us to the present. As I said, our tradition is to seek the Lord for a word or vision for the New Year. This year's word was literally a word: *Choices*. Lynn was drawn to the scripture in Joshua:

JOS 24:14 “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

JOS 24:15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

A Year of Choices. We’re still in the building process, still rebuilding our house, building our lives in the Lord and being a part of building God’s church. What are our choices in this process?

Late last year we were taking the scripture from Haggai literally, It says in

HAG 1:8 Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored.”

I don’t know if the hills of Divide or our backyard really qualifies as mountains, but we are using some of those trees in our house. Actually, Lynn had suggested we salvage some of the aspen that had been damaged. Lynn thought it would be good to take some of the straight ones and make them into pillars for the front porch and living room. There were about a dozen 60-70 foot trees that had been killed. I had already been cutting them into firewood. There were a few left when we decided to make the posts. One weekend I cut some of those into 11 foot lengths, pushed the lengths away from the building site, intending to finish the next week. The next week they were covered by tons of dirt. Upset that my plans were foiled, and that we would have to use less accessible trees, and that all my work was covered by dirt, I began to blame Lynn for the situation. When she finally got a word in edgewise, it was a warning. Something to this effect: “Be careful, you’re making memories. Every time you pass by the pillars, you’ll be reminded of how they got there. Choose the memories wisely.”

Choose fit building materials

My choice: Would the pillars be cut and loaded in a spirit of impatience, anger and frustration, or patience, trust, and peace? These were the same choices I had been facing all through the past months. Now, God was bringing the lesson right to my front porch. He wants me to overcome. He wants us all to overcome. He wants his house to be built with undefiled, quality building materials:

1CO 3:9 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. (10) By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. (11) For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1CO3:12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, (13) his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. (14) If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. (15) If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Whoa! Don’t need that again!

Although we are being built into a habitation for God, we are also co-workers with Him in the process. It’s a house for us AND a house for Him. In Ezekiel, God describes the temple.

EZE 40:4 The man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here.

And in more than 70 verses, Ezekiel then describes, in detail, specifications and measurements of walls, gateways, foyers, alcoves, stairways, windows, courtyards, rooms, walkways and pavements, even decorations and furnishings. But he explains that there is a basic law covering it all.

Holiness is the Basic Law of the Temple

EZE 43:10 “Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider the plan,

EZE 43:11 and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations.

EZE 43:12 “This is the (basic) law of the temple: (absolute holiness). All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be most holy. Such is the (primary) law of the temple.

In one way, by describing the temple as having rooms, walkways, courtyards and compartments surrounding it, God grants that our lives are indeed compartmentalized. Our tendency is to allow those compartments to be set aside for purposes other than God’s. The challenge for us is to CHOOSE to build each of those rooms for His occupancy, with all the materials and care that would bring Him glory.

Finally, we get to furnish the house. We get to CHOOSE all the furniture and stuff we bring into this new house. What an opportunity for a continual New Beginning!

So what do you do if you want a new beginning and you haven’t had your house burn down (yet)??

When all the smoke clears and dust settles, there is just one issue: who are you going to trust? Heb 6:2: in the list of foundational doctrines in Christ, following right after Repentance from dead works, is Faith toward God. It’s simple: turn from acts that lead to death and trust God and God alone. One the acts that

His Word helps to focus that trust in Him alone. One psalm particularly applies:

PSA 62:1 A psalm of David.

My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him.

PSA 62:2 He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

PSA 62:3 How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down—this leaning wall, this tottering fence?

PSA 62:4 They fully intend to topple him from his lofty place; they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse. Selah

PSA 62:5 Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.

PSA 62:6 He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

PSA 62:7 My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

PSA 62:8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah

PSA 62:9 Lowborn men are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.

PSA 62:10 Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

PSA 62:11 One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong,

PSA 62:12 and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.

The entire psalm is pertinent, but verses 11 and 12 sum it up: God wants us to know and trust in Him, in who He really is: strong and loving, or all powerful and merciful. When I rebel against the sovereign circumstances He has brought me into, I question His power and character. Faith

HEB 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he Is Who He IS and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

One of the rewards God gives is a confidence that what He says is true...that His Word is true and that it is for you...today. All His promises are Yes and Amen:

ISA 44:24-26 “This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, (25) who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, (26) who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’ of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be built,’ and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them,’

Look what He says about new beginnings. Choose to believe He says these things to you:

ISA 42:9 See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

ISA 43:18 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. (19) See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

ISA 65:17-18 “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (18) But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. (That’s us!)

EZE 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. (26) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

2CO 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

TIT 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

EPH 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; (23) to be made new in the attitude of your minds; (24) and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

REV 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Foundation Components:

Righteousness and Justice

2CH 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.

PSA 87:1 He has set his foundation on the holy mountain;

PSA 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.

ISA 33:5-6 The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

PSA 97:1-3 The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side.

Seek the Kingdom First

Mat 6:33 Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.

HAG 1:4-9 “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” (5) Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.(6) You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” (7) This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. (8) Go up into the mountains and bring down timber (evangelism: ‘I see men like trees’) and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD. (9) “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the LORD Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.

Who is Righteousness?

Jesus is Cornerstone of a True Foundation

ISA 28:16 So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

ISA 33:6 He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and

EPH 2:19 ... You are members of God’s household (family) (20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (21) In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. (22) And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

MIC 4:1 In the last days the mountain of the LORD’S temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.

MIC 4:2 Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Revelation of Christ

MAT 16:15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

MAT 16:16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

MAT 16:17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

MAT 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

MAT 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

You are living stones

1PE 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—

1PE 2:5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1PE 2:6 For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

1PE 2:7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,”

Temple, Walls and City quarried and built together

1KI 7:9-10 All these structures, from the outside to the great courtyard and from foundation to eaves, were made of blocks of high-grade stone cut to size and trimmed with a saw on their inner and outer faces. The foundations were laid with large stones of good quality, some measuring ten cubits and some eight.

Foundation made from quality, cut stone, prepared in the quarry

1KI 5:17 At the king’s command they removed from the quarry large blocks of quality stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the temple.

1KI 6:7 In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.

Structural Components of Foundation

Repentance

1KI 5:3 “You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD put his enemies under his feet.

2TI 2:19 Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”

HEB 6:1-2 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

The Land may be the only thing left! No structure from the old life. No life from the old life. The very land must be cleansed – the ashes, the debris, the chemicals from the fire. The soul ties to the past released. Repentance is the first component resting on the land. We (our land) is cursed by the blood of Abel UNTIL we receive the fundamental fact of forgiveness worked by the blood of Jesus poured out on us (the earth) at Calvary. We understand that repentance is a turning from a life of sin and to God, but do we really understand the full implication of that? “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” What I define as good in my life, as well as the bad, needs to be taken to the altar, my whole life a living sacrifice presented to God, all of me identified with Jesus on the cross.

Endurance

REV 3:12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

All of our resources

1CH 29:2 With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities.

Personal treasures

1CH 29:3 Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple:

Hope in God; be rich in good deeds, willing to share

1TI 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.(18) Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

(19) In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Trust, Expectations and Responsibility

My life has been characterized by a strong desire to trust. In many instances, I placed my trust in individuals or institutions with an expectation that I could depend upon them for some positive outcome or result. I placed institutions such as the U.S. Air Force Academy, the Air Force, a Christian business, The Church, and finally, my “member-owned” insurance company in positions of trust with the expectation that they would fulfil some aspect of need in my life. Job security, career fulfillment, a financial compensation, etc. I wanted to believe that my idea of my best interests and theirs were fully compatible.

BEGIN THE PROCESS

So let's begin the process of rebuilding . . .

Remember God's Promises

Isaiah61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; **2** To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, **3** To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."

Isaiah60:1 Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. **2** For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.

10 "The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, And their kings shall minister to you; For in My wrath I struck you, But in My favor I have had mercy on you. **11** Therefore your gates shall be open continually; They shall not be shut day or night, That men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, And their kings in procession.

13 "The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, The cypress, the pine, and the box tree together, To beautify the place of My sanctuary; And I will make the place of My feet glorious. **14** Also the sons of those who afflicted you Shall come bowing to you, And all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; And they shall call you The City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

15 "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, So that no one went through you, I will make you an eternal excellence, A joy of many generations.

17 "Instead of bronze I will bring gold, Instead of iron I will bring silver, Instead of wood, bronze, And instead of stones, iron. I will also make your officers peace, And your magistrates righteousness. **18** Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, Neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; But you shall call your walls Salvation, And your gates Praise.

Isaiah61:4 And they shall rebuild the old ruins, They shall raise up the former desolations, And they shall repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations.

6 But you shall be named the priests of the Lord, They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, And in their glory you shall boast. **7** Instead of your shame you shall have double honor,

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. **11** For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Isaiah62:1 For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp that burns.

2 . . . You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the Lord will name. **3** You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the Lord, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God. **4** You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, (Literally My Delight Is in Her) and your land Beulah (literally Married); For the Lord delights in you, And your land shall be married.

5 . . .as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.

6 I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, **7** And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. **8** The Lord has sworn by His right hand And by the arm of His strength: "Surely I will no longer give your grain

As food for your enemies; And the sons of the foreigner shall not drink your new wine, For which you have labored. **9** But those who have gathered it shall eat it, And praise the Lord; Those who have brought it together shall drink it in My holy courts.”

10 Pass through, Pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; Build up, Build up the highway! Take out the stones, Lift up a banner for the peoples! **11** Indeed the Lord has proclaimed To the end of the world: “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Surely your salvation is coming; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him.’ “ **12** And they shall call them The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; And you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.

That’s part of the vision God has for you, and us together. To help us see the vision, God gives us picture stories, historical accounts which hold a meaning behind the facts of history, meaning to give us hope. Nehemiah is one of those picture stories.

Ps 78:1 My people, listen to my teaching; listen to what I say. **2** I will speak using stories; I will tell secret things from long ago. **3** We have heard them and known them by what our ancestors have told us. **4** We will not keep them from our children; we will tell those who come later about the praises of the Lord. We will tell about his power and the miracles he has done. **5** The Lord made an agreement with Jacob and gave the teachings to Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children. **6** Then their children would know them, even their children not yet born. And they would tell their children. **7** So they would all trust God (NCV)

The Holy Spirit Will Lead the Rebuilding

Nehemiah, whose name means, “Jehovah comforts,” i.e., a type of the Holy Spirit, shows us this process in the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls. In it he shows us insights into the “how” of the process including the “behind the scenes” work of the Holy Spirit and the ways He brings us together as a body to do the work.

Don’t accept workers who are not true servants of the Lord

Many will present themselves as workers or leaders. Be careful who you let help. Often, we are tempted to use the world’s resources and principles to expedite or implement the building process. Manipulative fund raising, compromises in the establishing of leadership, e.g., setting in leaders on the basis of natural abilities instead of proven character.

EZR 4:1 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, (2) they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.” (3) But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”

Persecution will Follow

When the world is excluded from the building process and Satan knows he can’t ruin the work from within, persecution will follow.

Ezra 4:4 Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. (5) They hired counselors to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia. (6) At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

The accuser of the brethren will make his case:

Ezra4:12-13 The king should know that the Jews who came up to us from you have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring the walls and repairing the foundations.

Ezra4:15 . . .that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed.

When they brought the accusation, the building actually stopped.

Ezra 4:18 The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me. **19** And I gave the command, and a search has been made, and it was found that this city in former times has revolted against kings, and rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it. **20** There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the region beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them. **21** Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me. **22** Take heed now that you do not fail to do this. Why should damage increase to the hurt of the kings? **23** Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease. **24** Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Does the Accuser have a Case Against Our Building Today?

It's true. We have sinned. We have all come short of the glory of God. Just like the letter says, "In former times we revolted." We made a rap sheet a mile long. So maybe the devil's right. Or maybe not.

1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

So Jesus took our sins upon Himself, paid the price with His own death and voided the record.

Ne 2:10 When **Sanballat** the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

Ne 2:19 But when **Sanballat** the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

Interesting note: Sanballat means "Strength." Whose strength do you think it is referring to? It is Very Important that we don't build in our own strength:

PSA 137:7 Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites (representing the Flesh) did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!"

Zec 4:6 : 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts.

But Sanballat won't give up. He'll be angry and trying discouraging you with mockery.

Ne 4:1 But it came to pass, that when **Sanballat** heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing?"

These verses expose much of the concerns of the enemy of our souls. Look at their questions:

Will they fortify themselves? They don't want us to be fortified, built up, strong in our defenses.

Will they offer sacrifices? What sacrifices are they afraid of? Since Jesus has already made the ultimate and complete sacrifice, the enemy is wanting to deter our sacrifices of praise.

Will they complete it in a day? Eternity is on our side, but we often become discouraged in time. The enemy uses tactics of distraction, discouragement, impatience and unbelief (in God's promises) to stop the work.

Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?" *God's answer to this is the Ultimate Restoration: Resurrection Life!*

4:3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.” *Mockery and scorn are ancient tools. Today’s media has become almost boring in its use of this in their routine attacks on the church and men and women of righteousness.*

Continual Prayer in the Process

Our response to mockery is prayer.

Neh4:4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! **5** Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.

Expect resistance all through the process

The resistance to the rebuilding of the walls is no less intense than the resistance to the rebuilding of the temple. But under the encouragement of God’s Word, the work will go on.

EZR 6:14 So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

Neh4:6 So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

The enemy won’t give up easily.

Ne 4:7 Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, **8** and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion.

Continual (More) Prayer in the Process

Neh4:9 Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.

Vigilance against the enemy caused a 24/7 watch.

Continue to build

10 Then Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.”

11 And our adversaries said, “They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.”

12 So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, “From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us.”

13 Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.” **15** And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.

16 So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah. **17** Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a

weapon. **18** Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me. **19** Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, “The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. **20** Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.” **21** So we labored in the work, and half of the men ^{F19} held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. **22** At the same time I also said to the people, “Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day.” **23** So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.

BUILDING IS COMPLETE

Dedication

Nehemiah’s sequences of dedicating The Wall

Furnishing the Building

Jer 32:34 Fear to set up idols within the temple.

Getting Rid of Bad Walls

Ez 43:8 They put their idol altars right next to mine with only a wall between them and me. (New Living Translation)

Housewarming

Ps 132:13-14 God has chosen Jerusalem and desires to live in it.

Rev 21:

It must be restored

Restoration of the Temple

Restoration of Walls

Neh 4

Am 4:2-4 Holes in the walls

Straight relationship with God Am 7:7-9 The plump line

Clean out the Stuff that doesn’t belong

2KI 23:4 The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel.

Break associations with the Pagan Priests

2KI 23:5 He did away with the pagan priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem—those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts.

2KI 23:6 He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people.