Contender – The Fallen Me #4

Can we celebrate Jehovah Jireh! He is the God who sees and the God who provides.

This year, 2025, is the year we Engage with God and Engage our Faith. We are going after the detached, the drifted, and those who Don't Know!

I want to focus on the word Engage for this series of Contender. We will examine biblical accounts of how things were not just given to people, but they had to Contend for them or Contend for the Faith to fight for what they believed God was calling them to.

The Contender Series is about “Fighting For Your Faith.”

To get this result, “He cannot be just a Sunday morning Jesus.”

Engagement generally implies involvement, participation, or commitment. Engage comes from the French word "to pledge" or to make a deep, long-lasting, if not lifetime commitment to someone or to a cause.

As we contend for the Faith, it is not if I fall, but how I get up!

Proverbs 24:16, which states, "For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again."

1. **Moses** - After killing an Egyptian, he fled into the wilderness. God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, giving him a second chance (Exodus 2-3).
2. **David** - Committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged for Uriah's death. After repenting, God forgave him and continued to use him as king of Israel (2 Samuel 11-12).
3. **Peter** - Denied Jesus three times during His trial. After His resurrection, Jesus restored Peter and commissioned him to lead the early Church (Matthew 26; John 21).
4. **Mary Magdalene** - Delivered from seven demons, she struggled with her past but became a devoted follower of Christ and the first person to witness His resurrection (Luke 8:2; John 20:1-18).
5. **Jonah** - Disobeyed God by fleeing from His command to go to Nineveh. After repenting in the belly of a great fish, he was restored and fulfilled God's calling (Jonah 1-3).
6. **Saul (Paul)** - Once a fierce persecutor of Christians, he encountered Christ on the road to Damascus, repented, and became an influential apostle (Acts 9).
7. **The Prodigal Son** - Wasted his inheritance and lived recklessly, but upon returning home, he was welcomed and restored by his father (Luke 15:11-32).
8. **Manasseh** - A king who led Judah into idolatry. He humbled himself before God during captivity, repented, and was restored to his kingdom (2 Chronicles 33:10-13).
9. **Zacchaeus** - A dishonest tax collector who stole from his people. After encountering Jesus, he repented and restored what he had taken (Luke 19:1-10).
10. **James** - Initially doubting his brother Jesus, he later became a pillar of the early Church and wrote the book of James, emphasizing the importance of faith and works (John 7:5; Acts 15).

The Book of Nehemiah narrates the inspiring story of a Jewish leader and the cupbearer to the Persian king, who is called by God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem after years of desolation. Nehemiah makes a journey back to his homeland to rally the fallen people and restore their dignity and security.

Nehemiah 2:9-20

**9**Then I came to the governors of the province beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. **10**But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

**11**So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. **12**Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode.**13**I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. **14**Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. **15**Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. **16**And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

**17**Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” **18**And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work. **19**But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” **20**Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claimin Jerusalem.”

We all have situations in our lives where we feel like our world is burning down around us.

Nehemiah 2:20 And I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success." (NIV)

To those of you who have fallen, failed, and are so frustrated that you think there is no future, shout it out, "The God of heaven will give me success.”

Nehemiah 2:13 “I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire.”

Dragon Spring - sea-serpent or jackal: —dragon, sea-monster, serpent

Dung Gate - a heap of rubbish or filth: —dung (hill).

It doesn't matter if it is the serpent, the enemy, or your own dung decisions; you must decide to get up again.

The first step to getting up is realizing the reality of your current situation. Quit blaming people, circumstances, unfairness, and demons for your dung.

Many people find themselves "fallen" into an issue and then turn to God to get through it. We may even come to know God better through the problem, so we automatically assume that it was God's will for them to go through it.

This mindset is a common spiritual flaw that causes you to sit in the pain, rather than rising above the problem.

Most issues arise because we weren't seeking God; therefore, we made decisions that were not in God's will (or in disobedience), which resulted in our problems.

Our disobedience was not God’s will, but our restoration is.

John 1:29 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

He is the God who takes away our sin and shame, not a God who lets us suffer through it.

In the midst of our struggle, Jesus can construct something great. If you'll ask the Holy Spirit to help you "Get Up," He will transform your life.

Sheri-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Travel with me back a couple years. Joel and I decided to take the boys to Mexico. With this trip I decided I wasn’t going to be the fuddy duddy. Whatever they decided to do, I would do as well, and they decided to zipline….

In this moment I had to contend with my mind, will, and emotions. Was it something I was looking forward to, not at all, but was it worth it in the end, yes it was. The memories made on that trip will stay with us all but I had to choose to enjoy the moment.

Nehemiah’s world had collapsed, and he prayed in Chapter 1 that God would give him favor with man to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall. It took three months between that prayer and the King seeing Nehemiah. Nehemiah’s prayer was answered but immediately he was filled with fear. The King noticed him, saw him and saw his vulnerability. Nothing spells fear or anxiety than being noticed when you’re vulnerable.

Nehemiah overcame that fear and saw his opportunity from that prayer three months ago and he said it out loud. He wanted to rebuild Jersualem’s wall. The King’s response was phenomenal! He gave him the support he needed to go to Jersualem.

What if Nehemiah clamed up and let the moment slide, there wouldn’t be anything past the first chapter. Or Nehemiah would have never been written, and someone else’s story would have been written. You get the choice today to decide if you are going to be a follower of Christ. I didn’t mention salvation; I’m talking about living it out.

* Live out praying over your children or your spouse out loud
* Your first response to an emergency is prayer.
* Read the word
* Look for joy when things turn chaotic
* Be thankful

All of this sounds good but why do we stop there? Nehemiah choose to speak up when it would have been a lot easier to keep quiet. Praying over your children so they hear you makes you vulnerable, but I promise you only the first time is awkward. After that it becomes something mom or dad does, and they will start to look forward to it. Take your Bible to work and ask a co-worker to eat with you in the break room and you read at the same time to keep each other accountable. I promise only the ask is awkward and the rest will be east. Contend with your mind, will and emotions and start rebuilding your life. Choose to open your eyes and take the moments that God is giving you.

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Nehemiah is describing the gates of a wall, but you can relate it to the circumstances of your life.

Nehemiah 2:13 “the walls of Jerusalem that were broken”

Broken – meaning broken beyond repair – Hebrew – Broken to pieces

Many believers struggle with the past. I hear people say this all the time, “I just can’t get past my past!”

Your past is a gate that is broken beyond repair. You can’t fix it, you can’t change it, you are constantly dealing with it.

Some of you are broken because of the decisions you've made. Some of you are broken and damaged because of circumstances that were beyond your control.

Jesus didn’t come to fix your past; Jesus came to redeem your past and give you a future.

Nehemiah 2:13 “its gates that had been destroyed”

Destroyed –a state beyond recognition

*Messed up people mess up people.*

Paul describes a shipwreck in the book of Acts.

Acts 27:39 **“**Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned, if possible, to run the ship ashore.

Have you ever drifted so far and gone through such a storm that you don’t even recognize the landscape of your life?

I don’t recognize this marriage!

Whose kids are you?

How did we get here financially?

What started out as a subtle sin is now a super storm that has thrown you off course.

Did we ever think that it may not always be Organization, Job, Family, Friend, or Church that is messed up? It may be me that’s messed up!

Burned – Only ashes of what once was are left

All of us have ash piles of "What once was," that exist in our lives.

The ashes of a previous marriage or relationship that failed.

The dream career that didn't happen, knocking you off your feet, and now you are at a job you hate. The hope of a child that still hasn’t come or the ashes of a lost loved one that you wish you had one more minute with.

Even with Jesus life is hard, but without Him it is hopeless.

Isaiah 63:3-4

to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

Isaiah 63:7

Instead of their shame, my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.

Rebuilding – Doorway to your Destiny

Those things that have been broken beyond repair, destroyed beyond recognition, and burned so badly that all that is left are ashes — get ready, because Jesus didn’t come to fix your past; Jesus came to redeem your past and give you a future.

He will transform your fallen Dragon Gate and Dung Gate into a Destiny Gate to usher in His Glory!

Nehemiah 2:20 Then I (Nehemiah) replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build.

This action call is your starting place to Arise and Rebuild.