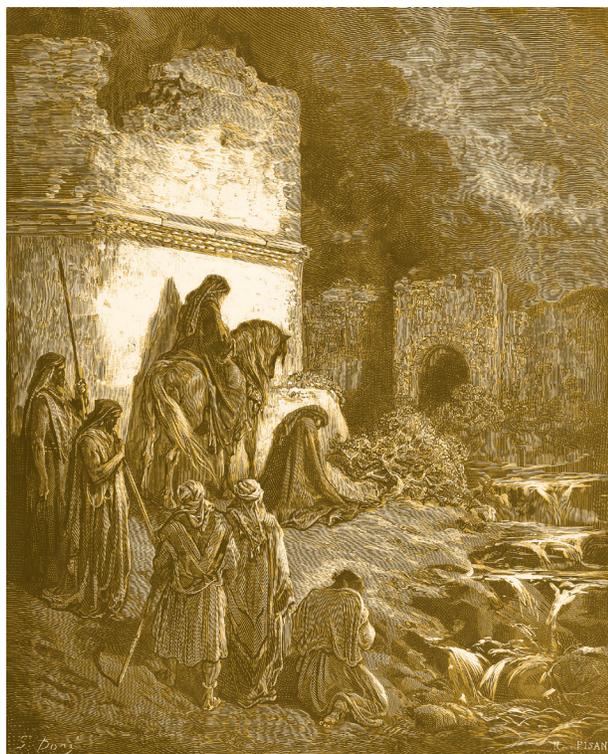


**Responding to Coronavirus  
Learning from Nehemiah**

# Responding to Coronavirus

## Learning from **Nehemiah**

By Julia Doxat-Purser, European Evangelical Alliance | April 2020



Gustave Doré, Nehemiah Views the Ruins of Jerusalem's Walls, 1866.

As we see how coronavirus is devastating lives, Christians are finding ways to bring hope to the wider community while following all the physical distancing rules. Many are already busy, others are not yet sure what to do.

Nehemiah heard about the devastation of Jerusalem and took time to weep, repent and pray. He then began to move forward but also stopped again to survey the walls, to check out what was really needed and to build a plan and a team.

This [great resource](#) by Bambang Budijanto looks at how the example of Nehemiah points to many parallels we can reflect on regarding how we respond to the coronavirus crisis. Dr Budijanto's resource has inspired a few thoughts below for Christian leaders to consider about getting involved in strengthening their "Jerusalem".

### ■ **Take Time**

Take time to work out what are the needs in your "Jerusalem". Talk and pray with other Christian leaders. Listen to your congregations. They may reveal hidden needy groups e.g. single parents or hidden assets and talents e.g. vans that can transport food or teachers willing to assist parents.

Take time to pray, repent and fast with other Christian leaders. In this devastating season, it is right to find the courage to feel some of the pain of those who are struggling and to consider what sins we must now turn away from.

Take time to consider together what you have to offer. What can you and the churches in your area offer that can be used by God during this crisis? Here are some ideas to get you thinking.

- People willing to pray for all those in leadership, on the frontline fighting the coronavirus battle, for all who are struggling to cope medically, relationally or economically.
- People willing to run a listening service &/or prayer line for those on the front line, the lonely, the bereaved. This will become a growing need as time goes on.
- Volunteers to collect and deliver groceries, medicines or meals. People to help, for example, a food bank who has lost many of its previous volunteers.
- Very local neighborhood champions who can set up phone & social media support groups so that neighbors are able to look after one another – and also share fun and hope virtually.
- Buildings that could be used by the community e.g. for storing emergency supplies or for cooking meals.
- People able to swiftly set up websites and social media accounts to share prayer needs, advertise support services etc.
- Those who can create online children's programs that can take some of the pressure off parents struggling with balancing work and family.
- Moments of joy, fun and hope. Creative ideas for what people can all do together from their homes, balconies, front doors.

## ■ **Talk to the local authorities**

If at all possible, talk to the local Council. Ideally, a small group of church leaders will meet the appropriate key leaders and act as a communication channel to all the churches & Christian organizations. If that's too ambitious, talk to the local Councillor that represents you. If you have had little contact with the authorities, be patient. It takes time to build trust. Even if you have had contact, this coronavirus crisis is putting huge pressure on everyone. Be flexible and gracious.

Humbly make yourselves available.

Share the ideas you have regarding what you think you can offer.

Ask what is already happening. Ask what they see as the greatest needs and the biggest gaps.

Tell them that the churches in the area are already praying for them and that they are very welcome to share prayer needs.

Consider what you may need from them in order to help. For example,

- You can keep the food banks running or set up new ones but you need the ability to do bulk buying of food or help with advertising so that more people donate.
- You can open your buildings e.g. as a community kitchen but you need help to source stuff.
- You can organize a “listening service” phone line but you need technical assistance.

Be willing to adapt your plans. Be willing to consider merging efforts e.g. by offering volunteers to other efforts.

You may not be able to work with the authorities because they will not take you seriously or you feel that your offering is too small. Even so, take time to monitor the wider response to coronavirus. It is important that what churches do does not undermine or duplicate what others are already doing well.

## ■ **Problems will come**

Stress, fatigue, discouragement and arguments will come. Unforeseen roadblocks will appear. Collaboration and unity may break down. There may be unfair criticism. Be ready. Protecting unity and hope is as vital as guarding the walls of Jerusalem.

Look after yourselves and all those working with you through prayer and mutual support conversations.

This is especially important as you will be doing everything at a physical distance from each other.

Keep praying for local leaders – political, medical, police, transport, business – and show grace.

## ■ **The job will be done**

The crisis will pass. One way or another, we will come out the other side of this time of emergency and lockdown. But it is likely that much damage will remain – to hearts, minds, bodies, relationships, livelihoods, infrastructure. We will have walls to rebuild. Let’s prayerfully remain alert so that we will be ready for what the Lord will ask us to do.

There will also be wonderful things remaining, e.g. of new neighborhood connections and new faith. Let’s pray now that there will be so much life, hope and joy that will remain.