



REBUILDING FROM THE RUINS

OUR PERSONAL STORY OF
RESTORATION AND HEALING

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Introduction

Restoration is one of the most powerful words, yet also one of the most misunderstood words in the Church. I know this because I have lived both the devastation of moral failure and the slow, painful work of restoration. Bonnie and I know firsthand what it is to lose hope — only to experience His redemption beyond what we could have ever imagined possible.

As a pastor, I experienced two moral failures where I committed adultery involving consenting adults — one in 1990 and another in 2005. After the immense devastation I caused to others, to my family, and to the Body of Christ, it became undeniable after the second time that I had not dealt with some of the core issues in my life. This booklet is not about image management. It is about death and resurrection.

Failure Is a Symptom

Moral failure is rarely about the surface behavior. Lust and sexual sins are destructive symptoms of something greater. It's often about:

- Unresolved wounds
- Uncrucified ambition
- Hidden entitlement
- Emotional immaturity
- Compartmentalized spirituality

For years, I knew how to function in ministry. I knew how to preach. I knew how to lead. But gifting can outrun

character. And when gifting outruns character, collapse is only a matter of time.

The Devastation Is Real

We can't afford to minimize the cost of sin. Sin is never isolated. It never stays contained to the private corners where it begins. When a leader falls, families are wounded, trust is fractured, churches are damaged, and the testimony of Christ is scarred. The ripple effects move far beyond the moment of failure.

My failure was not private. It hurt people — people who trusted me, walked with me, and were shaped in some way by my leadership. It brought confusion, disappointment, and pain. Those realities must be faced without excuse or minimization. Restoration cannot begin until we fully own the devastation. True repentance does not explain away, justify, or subtly redirect responsibility. It doesn't hide behind pressure, stress, misunderstanding, or the failures of others. True repentance says plainly: "I did this. I caused this. And I will not shift blame." Ownership is the doorway to rebuilding. Without it, any attempt at restoration is cosmetic and fragile. But when humility replaces defensiveness, and honesty replaces image, then healing can begin.

Stepping Out of Ministry

After 2005, I stepped completely out of ministry. I didn't preach, lead, or platform myself in any way. For over four years, I submitted to Christian counseling and pastoral

oversight. I invited hard questions. I allowed people to see behind the curtain — into motives, insecurities, wounds, and patterns that had fueled an unhealthy drive.

Many people can repent of behavior. Fewer repent of ambition. It is possible to confess wrongdoing while still protecting the deeper idol that produced it. Ambition can hide behind spiritual language. It can masquerade as zeal, vision, or calling. But unchecked ambition will always demand a platform, affirmation, and influence. It feeds on significance. It resists obscurity. Until ambition dies, restoration is incomplete. Only when ambition loses its grip can calling be trusted again. Only when identity is rooted in Christ alone can we experience His strength.

The Healing Process

Through counseling and the work of the Spirit, I began to identify areas in my heart that I had either ignored or misunderstood for years. Patterns of insecurity, approval-seeking, fear of failure, and misplaced identity were exposed. What I once justified as passion or drive was often rooted in deeper wounds. In that season, I experienced not just surface correction, but deep deliverance and healing. The Lord was patient but thorough.

I invited Bonnie into this process as well. Nothing was hidden. She had full access to the questions, the discoveries, and the hard conversations. Slowly, God began to restore what had been fractured. I began building on a different foundation — one of transparency, accountability, and a secure identity as a son first. The work was gradual, but it was real.

The Slow Work of Restoration

In our season of healing, my priorities changed. I wasn't asking, "When will I preach again?" I was asking, "How can I become a faithful son?" I was committed to being a good husband and father and walking in honesty and integrity before the Lord and my family. God restores — but not quickly and not cheaply. Restoration is not immediate. Restoration is rebuilding trust that involves proven character and accountability over time.

Trust is rebuilt in inches, not miles. It doesn't return because of a single apology, a public confession, or even a powerful moment of emotion. It is restored slowly, quietly, through a thousand small decisions that prove change is real. Time matters. Not because time heals, but because time reveals. Hidden obedience matters. The choices made when no one is watching matter. Consistency matters. The steady faithfulness over months and years is what begins to mend what was broken.

If you rush the process, you dishonor the people you hurt. You communicate that your restoration matters more than their healing. Real rebuilding allows others to move at their own pace. It accepts boundaries without resentment. It understands that credibility must be re-earned, not reclaimed. Humility embraces the long road, knowing that true restoration is not about returning to a position but about becoming trustworthy again.

Early in this process, I was invited to come on staff at New Life Church. I was genuinely grateful for the kindness

and confidence expressed by the pastor at that time. The invitation felt redemptive. It would have been easy to interpret it as confirmation that things were moving forward again — that perhaps the season of obscurity was over.

But deep down, I knew I couldn't short-circuit what the Lord was beginning to do in our lives. It would have been premature. Foundations were still being laid. To step back into a ministry role too quickly would have risked rebuilding on unfinished work. So with gratitude — but also conviction — I declined. I needed the hidden season more than I needed the opportunity. God was after something deeper than position. He was forming character and restoring our marriage. That process could not be rushed without compromising what He intended to make whole.

The Next Step

After another year and a half, the pastor of the church extended a second invitation for me to come on staff. By that point, we had been in our restoration process for four years. It had not been hurried. It had not been superficial. There had been sustained counseling and accountability. The desire to “get back” into ministry had long since been surrendered. Whatever God wanted next, I was at peace with.

Before responding, I consulted again with our counselor and with trusted pastors who had walked closely with us through the entire process. I invited their honest assessment. Each of them said the same thing: that if

I genuinely sensed this was the Lord's next step, they believed I was ready.

After two years in a supportive role, I became the senior pastor of New Life Church. I have now served as the pastor for fifteen years. That longevity is not something I take lightly. It represents grace and the faithfulness of God far more than my own strength. I have discovered the joy of a life intentionally lived under accountability. I have not walked this road alone. I have invited oversight, welcomed hard conversations, and submitted myself to trusted voices.

God's Promise to You

“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.” -Isaiah 61:4

Some of you may be dealing with old ruins. Family ruins, ministry ruins, or personal failure ruins. The Spirit of God does not pretend the ruins aren't there. He actually names them “old ruins.” What strikes me most is He does not say they will escape the ruins, He says, “They will rebuild.” Restoration is not removal; it is rebuilding. The promise of rebuilding declares something powerful: Your story is not finished!

When God restores, He doesn't use duct tape. He doesn't merely patch the surface. He restores what has been broken, even if it's been decades. If you are standing in ruins right now, Isaiah 61:4 declares that what was devastated will rise stronger than before. Though rebuilding is slow at first, stone by stone, faith by faith,

obedience by obedience, your ruins will become your testimony. The very place that once represented loss will one day stand as proof that God truly restores.

Another impacting part of failure is shame. After Peter's denial of Jesus, Luke 22:62 says that Peter "went out and wept bitterly." The worst part for Peter wasn't the denial, it was the shame. Something broke inside of Peter. Failure can be forgiven — but shame lingers. It whispers, "This is who you are now." Hebrews 12:2 would declare that Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame. After the resurrection and beside another charcoal fire, Jesus didn't replay Peter's failure.

And after his restoration, Peter stood in Jerusalem — the same city of his failure — and under the power of the Spirit, ushered in the birth of the Church. His past hadn't changed. His position had. The One who bore shame had broken its authority off of Peter's life. And when He calls your name again, shame loses its voice.

Bonnie and I believe in restoration. We believe it is the heart and desire of God. We actually believe that He LOVES to restore, that He loves to REDEEM. And we believe He wants to restore and redeem any and every area of your life as well.

A Prayer of Restoration for You

Father, You are the Restorer of ruined places. Where life feels desolate, where foundations seem cracked, where shame has left rubble behind — You are not intimidated.

You promised to rebuild the ancient ruins, to raise up former desolations, to restore what has been broken for generations.

So come.

Lay new foundations where trust collapsed. Breathe life into places long abandoned. Turn rubble into testimony. Where shame once marked the landscape, plant honor. Where regret built walls, raise altars of gratitude. Teach us not to fear the ruins — for You specialize in restoration. Rebuild what only You can rebuild. Strengthen what only You can strengthen. And let the story of our restoration glorify the One who restores.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Michael Fehlauer serves as the Senior Pastor of New Life Church in Corpus Christi, Texas — a congregation that has been in the midst of an extraordinary move of the Holy Spirit for the past several years. Under his leadership, New Life has witnessed more than 8,000 spontaneous water baptisms since 2018.

This outpouring has not been confined to the four walls of the church; it has spilled into the city, impacting Texas A&M–Corpus Christi and public schools across the region. Thousands of students and families have come to Christ, and numerous miraculous healings have been recorded as this wave of revival continues to sweep across Corpus Christi.

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