The Rebuilt Life
Studies in Nehemiah

Session 5 – Finished Walls and Frenemies | Nehemiah Chapter 6

As the rebuilding project nears completion, Nehemiah's personal character and integrity takes a direct hit from the opposition.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what Nehemiah can teach us about unshakeable faith.
- Consider ways the enemy uses fear to weaken our resolve and rule our actions.
- Pray honest prayers that cultivate courage and remain vigilant in success.

Ice Breaker

How well do you know Nehemiah? From our studies in Nehemiah so far, what character trait or habit do you most admire, and why?

Schemes and Intimidation

Nehemiah 6:1–9
When Sanballat and his allies failed to stop the rebuilding project, they went after Nehemiah.

1. Jerusalem's wall had been neglected in ruins for nearly 150 years. Amazingly, Nehemiah and his men rebuilt it *without any gaps* in 52 days. What did Sanballat and his allies do when they heard about this?

   a. Why did Nehemiah refuse to meet with them?

   b. Describe how Sanballat's open letter increased the pressure on Nehemiah.

Good to Know

As the king's cupbearer, Nehemiah would not have taken a rumor of disloyalty lightly. Early in Artaxerxes' reign, a revolt in one of his provinces took six years to defeat. During that same time, the king sent Ezra to Jerusalem with his blessing. But opponents (Sanballat was likely among them) convinced the king that the Jews were also a threat to the Persian empire (Ezra 4). Nehemiah understood the danger of such a rumor.

2. If Sanballat could discredit Nehemiah's character, it would undermine the entire project. Such a serious accusation, though untrue, would circulate and Nehemiah's response would be a crucial factor in determining how—*or if*—the work continued.

   a. What did Nehemiah realize about their plot and how did he respond?

   b. Put yourself in Nehemiah's spot. What would you have prayed and asked the Lord to do?

   c. Nehemiah prayed for strength to keep working and left the care of his reputation to God. People may praise, or criticize, but it's who we are before God that counts. We may not be able to avoid rumors but we don't have to feed them. According to God's Word, what is the best way to fight a rumor?

      Proverbs 2:6–7

      Psalm 1:1–3

      Psalm 119:69

      1 Peter 3:13–17

Memory Verse

As you memorize this verse, make it part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind.
2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV

Think About It . . .

Nehemiah's enemies tried to discourage him with lies and intimidation. What tends to draw you away from confident prayer and clear thinking?

Courage under Fire

Nehemiah 6:10–14
Shemaiah tries to convince Nehemiah that his life is in danger.

1. Since Shemaiah had access to the temple, he may have been a priest. It seems that Shemaiah confined himself at home, pretending to be in danger himself. Or he may have done it as a symbolic act to give more weight to his "prophecy" that Nehemiah was going to be killed.

   a. What two reasons did Nehemiah give for refusing to go along with Shemaiah's plan?

   b. Remember when Nehemiah urged the workers to stay at their post? "Our God will fight for us" (Nehemiah 4:20). What would it say about their leader if Nehemiah abandoned his post now?

   c. Remember when Nehemiah rebuked the leaders for breaking God's law in order to profit themselves? (Nehemiah 5:9). What would it say if Nehemiah ignored God's law out of fear for his own safety?

Good to Know

If an Israelite's life was threatened, it was lawful to seek refuge at the altar outside the temple, but only priests could go into the holy place within (Numbers 18:7).

2. Nehemiah's courage under fire is remarkable. What kept his thinking clear? It's worth noting that his resolve to trust and obey God first (verse 11) is what enabled him to have courage and discern the situation correctly.

   Think about it. It's not a sin to be afraid, it's an emotion. It is a powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal to tempt us to sin. The enemy uses fear to weaken our resolve and rule our actions. Nehemiah knew God's Word and he knew the power of prayer. He relied on both for strength when he needed it most. He is a biblical hero to us, but he had heroes too. Note just a few, and what Nehemiah would have seen in them.

   Psalm 16:8

   Psalm 31:1–4, 15

   Daniel 3:17–18

   Daniel 6:10, 20–22

"The highest degree of courage is seen in the person who is fearful but refuses to capitulate to it."

J. Oswald Sanders
Spiritual Leadership

Success and Vigilance

Nehemiah 6:15–19

Rebuilding the wall in fifty-two days was a stunning success, but Nehemiah fills in another detail at the end of this chapter. While he was busy finishing the wall, Tobiah was building an alliance with some of the Jewish nobles.

1. The wall was finished, but the gates still needed to be hung (see verse 1). Here's something to consider. If the enemy can't have us living with broken walls, he at least wants us to leave the gate open. He doesn't care if you *look* finished, so long as he can still get in.

   Eve left the gate open when she believed the serpent's lie that God was holding out on her. She reached for that forbidden fruit instead of obeying God. King David left the gate open when he stayed home instead of going out to battle. Bathsheba caught his eye and the rest is history. Peter left the gate open when he boasted of being more devoted and courageous than the average disciple. But when fear gripped him, he denied knowing Jesus.

   Can you identify an open gate in your life? Nehemiah refused to compromise under pressure or success, and so must we. Explain how we keep the enemy from getting a foot in the door.

   Psalm 119:10–11

   Proverbs 4:23, 26

   1 Corinthians 10:12–13

   Ephesians 6:10–11

2. Nehemiah ends this chapter by mentioning a different kind of pressure he faced. Tobiah tried to use his connections to get Nehemiah into an alliance with him, but Nehemiah resisted. From what you read in the text, who had clouded judgment: the nobles or Nehemiah? Why, and in what way?

Gospel at a Glance: Enemies of the Cross | Nehemiah's enemies did everything they could to prevent him from finishing the work God called him to do. They tempted him with false offers of peace, but Nehemiah would not be deterred: "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down." They used fear and intimidation but Nehemiah refused to back down: "But now, O God, strengthen my hands." Nehemiah's resolve is noteworthy for the glimpse it gives us of Jesus who endured threats, taunts, and temptations, yet He resolved to finish the work that His Father sent Him to do (John 17:4). He was not swayed by the devil's false offer of peace (Matthew 4:8–9), or the eager multitude to make Him king (John 6:15), or the mockers who dared Him to come down from the cross (Mark 15:29-32). Jesus "set His face like a flint" (Isaiah 50:7) to redeem and restore broken lives. The enemies of the Cross, could not prevent Jesus from accomplishing the *finished work of salvation*.

Adoration **C**onfession **T**hankfulness **S**upplication

"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 6:18 NIV

God sparked Nehemiah to pray and take action. Others joined in and the work began. With God's blessing, power and protection, the wall was rebuilt. In each session, we will take time to pray—for others and for ourselves, for our church, our communities, and our nation.

As a focus for prayer, you can use the memory verse, another scripture, or simply what the Lord has impressed on you from the chapter. No need to be profound or elaborate, just authentic.

Record your simple prayer, including each element here.

A _____

C _____

T _____

S _____

Group Prayer Requests

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Notes

Notes

©2017-2018 Harvest Christian Fellowship, All Rights Reserved.