



Overcoming Distractions and Personal Attacks

RECAP

Focus: The greater the opposition against you, the greater opportunity for God to fight for you.

God called Nehemiah to do an extraordinary work. What started as a broken heart for God's people led to a massive project to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Favored by God and backed by the people, the work began. Just as the first stones were set down, the opposition showed up illustrating for us the nature of what happens when you set out to do a great work for God.

In Nehemiah 4, 5, and 6, we see three types of opposition attacking Nehemiah. In chapter 4, it was the external opposition of the surrounding neighbors using ridicule, criticism, and discouragement. Nehemiah's response was to pray, remember the Lord, and prepare his people for any potential physical attacks.

As the builders stood on the wall, they carried a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. They worked tirelessly to finish the task, but the enemy was right there to try and thwart the work. Nehemiah was quick to deal with the distractions and keep everyone focused in order to stay on track.

In chapter 5, he was faced with a different type of opposition. This time, it was coming from within. Internal opposition reared its ugly head as self-centeredness and greed set in. The unrighteous rich saw an opportunity to fill their pockets using the poor and grow their portfolio. Inflation was high and interest rates shot through the roof. To survive, the poor sold homes, farms, and even sold their children. Nehemiah confronted the problem head on. He called out the wickedness of rich who were using their own people to get ahead. Once again, Nehemiah guided them toward repentance and obedience. He not only demanded repentance, but restitution so that the poor would not remain in poverty.

Nehemiah had overcome external opposition from his critics and enemies and internal opposition from his own people. In Chapter 6, he faced personal attacks directly from his enemies. Unable to distract and divert him from the project, the enemy used the tool of disgracing him personally. Story of Nehemiah is recognizable throughout history. God sets out to do a great work through gifted leaders and His people, and the enemy responds with tactics of deceit, condemnation, doubt, and fear. Just as in any battle, the shortest route to victory is to take out the highest-ranking officer, so too is the strategy in Nehemiah. Because of his impeccable character, his enemies' resort to using the demonic tactic of fabricating lies. When that didn't work, they tried to weaponize his faith against him. Nehemiah never wavered and saw through their manipulation and lies. The attacks continued but Nehemiah never backed down. When it became difficult and opposition was from all sides, he persevered. He did not lose courage or stop pressing forward.

Perhaps you are under attack right now. God has called you to a great work, but you are feeling the opposition from all sides. These chapters are a case study in leadership as well as common tactics the Enemy uses against God's people. Reread Nehemiah 4-6, identify the Enemy's tactics, mirror Nehemiah's responses, and remember that "greater is he that is in you is greater than he who is in the world". Don't give up!



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SHARE (5-10 min)

Icebreaker Question: Describe a time where you felt like giving up.

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Nehemiah 5-6

1. What stood out to you about the message on Sunday? Is there anything that was unclear, or that you have questions about?
2. "God's work is always carried out in a hostile environment." How does remembering this phrase help you? When you think of a spiritual battle, what comes to mind?
3. Nehemiah faced opposition in three ways; external (discouragement), internal (division), and personal attacks (destruction). In what ways are you experiencing opposition in your own life? How can Nehemiah's response in chapters 4-6 help you?
4. Read Nehemiah 5:1-12. Why do you think internal strife is so devastating in a family, church, or workplace? How should we deal with internal opposition?
5. In Nehemiah 6, the enemy uses deceit, condemnation, doubt, and fear to attack Nehemiah. Why is it critical to discern the method and source of the attack? How should you respond to each of them?
6. God calls all of us to be part of His work. What distracts you from doing God's work? What kinds of things keep you from finishing the work He calls you to?
7. Nehemiah demonstrates clear lessons on how to deal with enemies and critics. Which one of them applies to you in this season of life?
8. Which of Nehemiah's examples of "handling conflict and opposition" were most helpful to you? Why?

SUPPORT (15 min)

Prayer is our greatest weapon in the fight against our enemy. Nehemiah spent a lot of time alone and praying. How can your Life Group be sure that no one in your group is doing life alone and is praying alone?