

Nehemiah: Defeating Discouragement 01/15/2012

Nehemiah: Jew, serving as cupbearer to the King in Persia, living comfortable life, found out from brother walls in Jerusalem broken down, gates burnt with fire; devastated, heart broken; prayed to God and asked King for permission; king sent him back; traveled 1k miles back to Jerusalem, surveyed the damaged, assembled the troops; after 140 years of hopelessness Nehemiah brought hope; said we can rebuild these walls and they started rebuilding and making progress

Opponents: Sanballat, Tobiah and others

Whenever you move forward for God, your spiritual enemy wants to stop you.

Bible says we have a spiritual enemy that wants to kill, steal and destroy everything important to the heart of God. He roars around like a lion looking for someone to devour.

Big Idea: WE DON'T FACE OPPOSITION AND DISCOURAGEMENT BECAUSE WE'RE DOING SOMETHING WRONG, WE FACE IT BECAUSE WE'RE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT.

If we're not doing anything significant, our spiritual enemy will not pay any attention to us.

1 Corinthians 16:9 MSG ***"A huge door of opportunity for good work has opened up here. (There is also mushrooming opposition.)"***

Three ways our enemy tries to discourage us:

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, 2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble — burned as they are?" 3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building — if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!" Nehemiah 4:1-3

Three specific types of opposition and discouragement:

- **CRITICISM**

How Sanballat and Tobiah tried to attack the Jewish people.

Ex. you get so excited → others not so excited; you want to start Bible study in school → others make fun of you; every time we've taken a risk to follow God there has been critics

Criticism is a part of following God in a world of unbelievers. Anything you want to do significant will bring criticism.

How did Nehemiah handle it? Did he go to them and try to talk it out, convince them of his side, try to convert them? No. He did:

1 – he took it to God. Pattern: discouragement à take it to God (vs. 4:4, 4:9)

2 – he got back to work

Don't lead defensively and beg people to be on your side. Take it to God and get back to work! Ex. Facebook message from last week, very personal attack.

You don't answer to critics. You answer to God.

- **OBSTACLES**

2 steps forward, 3 steps back

Ex. get out of debt a car breaks down; lead family spiritually à teen says I'm not sure I believe in God; share your faith with a co-worker and they end up being sick that entire week and gone from work; Leaving TI decision, getting a promotion and job grade increase in the SAME week!

So many God given dreams die at the first obstacle. Don't let an obstacle discourage you from doing what you believe God called you to do.

Video: Darth Vader Volkswagen Superbowl 2011

Commercial <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55e-uHQna0> (not giving up, Dad like God working in our life)

- **FROM THE INSIDE.**

Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." Nehemiah 4:10

Jews: We don't have what it takes? Who are we to actually think we can rebuild these walls? They've been down for 140 years. We're not good enough.

Ex. help to feed hungry children, take children in your home, lead a Life Group, pursue a dream, **Voice:** who do you think you are? You're all show. You're too young... a stay at home mom, business guy, not spiritual enough **Fear:** what if I fail, what will people think, I don't have what it takes.

Illustration: A man whom many believe was the greatest American leader of all time. When he was **7** years of age, his family was forced out of their home, and he went to work. When he was **9**, his mother died. He lost his job as a store clerk when he was **20**. He wanted to go to law school, but he didn't have the education. At age **23** he went into debt to be a partner in a small store. Three years later the business partner died, and the resulting debt took years to repay.

When he was **28**, after courting a girl for four years, he asked her to marry him, and she turned him down. On his third try he was elected to Congress, at age **37**, but then failed to be re-elected. His son died at 4 years of age. When this man was **45**, he ran for the Senate and lost. At age **47** he ran for the vice-presidency and lost. But at age **51** he was elected president of the United States.

The man was **Abraham Lincoln**, a man who learned to face discouragement and move beyond it.

HOW DO YOU DEFEAT DISCOURAGEMENT?

After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." Nehemiah 4:14

New Testament Times: Don't be afraid of them because...

... You, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

... If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)

... ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (Romans 8:35)

... ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

1. **DON'T BE ALONE**. This was a group effort. Nehemiah wasn't alone. The people weren't doing this by themselves --> Life Groups

2. **REMEMBER THE LORD**.

...Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome. Nehemiah 4:14

Loaded statement... remember their ancestors

Remember → God is BIGGER than your problems.

Ex. Remember my sophomore year in college; \$30k obstacle to adopt
Life Church – building favor; lives changed

3. **FIGHT FOR YOUR CAUSE**.

...and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." Neh. 4:14

Christianity is not a playground, it's often a battleground.

Who are you fighting for? Unborn, victims of human trafficking, homeless, orphan, kids with no father figure in their life, your marriage, your own children, those who don't know Christ

Index cards... Remember with others... boards.