

# Nehemiah—Building for the Future

## STUDY 4

### Facing external opposition

Nehemiah Chapter 4

#### Introduction

In Chapter one of the book we observed Nehemiah gain victory through prayer. In chapter two we learnt seven principles in leadership and saw Nehemiah motivate the nation of the Jews to get behind his God given vision. In chapter three we read of the mobilization of many teams to achieve the vision. In the first three chapters Nehemiah gained great victory with relative ease. Now in chapter four he faces considerable opposition. As we examine Nehemiah’s actions and attitudes when facing external opposition; we will glean contemporary application for our modern circumstance.

#### Opening Discussion Questions

What are the issues the world is using to attack the church today? The gay marriage issue? The gender issue? “Although I am female, I feel like a boy, so I need the freedom to be a boy” or vice versa. (Even if they have only just started high school.)

Because Jesus taught principles that are not in keeping with the ever- changing world view, the church feels under attack. How do you feel about these issues?

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Not interested?

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Not empowered to say anything?

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Under attack?

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As a group read Nehemiah 4:1-23

Sanballat: who was governor over Samaria hoped to extend his governorship to include Judah; he saw Nehemiah's leadership as a threat to this.

Tobiah: was governor of Trans Jordan which included the Ammonite territory, he saw the re-establishment of the Jewish nation as a threat; there was a long history of conflict between the Ammonites and Israelites.

Both Sanballat and Tobiah had authority over armies so they were a genuine threat. (Ezra and Nehemiah, Tyndale Commentaries. Derek Kidner. Inter-Varsity Press. Pages 18. Copyright 1979 .)

1. Consider Nehemiah 4:1-3. What do you think Sanballat and Tobiah are trying to do?

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1a. Do you think Nehemiah and the Jews were expecting opposition? Why?

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2. Read Nehemiah 4:4-5. What was Nehemiah's immediate response to the opposition?

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3. Read Nehemiah 4:6. How did the workers respond when ridiculed by Sanballat and Tobiah?

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Peruse Nehemiah 4:7-8. Sanballat the Samaritan has an Israelite heritage, yet is deeply opposed to what the Jews are trying to achieve.

History of the Northern Kingdom Exile:

About 300 years before Nehemiah's time the Northern Kingdom of Israel was invaded by the Assyrians. Various Assyrian kings had the Northern Kingdom of Israel repopulated with people from other nations; particularly Samaria.

The new populace of nations intermarried with the few remaining Israelites of Samaria resulting in a mixed race. (Not so much in the Nazareth area, nor were exiles taken from Nazareth according to Unger's Bible dictionary, so the populace there was still largely Israelite.)

It is extraordinary to think that it was the Samaritan army, who are part Israelite, were opposing the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem! The hatred the Jews had towards the Samaritans in the New Testament is rooted in these events. (Unger's Bible Dictionary. Merrill F. Unger. Moody Press. Page 786,787. Copyright 1957. Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

4. Examine Nehemiah 4:9, 13 & 21. When Nehemiah hears of the anger and plots of Sanballat, Tobiah and the Arabs, what does he and the Jews do?

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When the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem, they not only broke down the walls but set the city aflame (2 Kings 8-10). Apparently when bricks are heated to extreme temperatures, they become brittle. Many of the bricks were probably unusable and no doubt made up much of the "rubble" referred to in Nehemiah 4:10.

5. Reflect upon Nehemiah 4:10-12. Do you think it is purely the physical work that is draining the strength of the Jews? Why?

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5a. How are some of the Jews being affected by this? (Neh. 4:12).

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5b. Do you think Satan uses similar tactics when coming against a church or a ministry? Can you think of an example?

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6. Read Nehemiah 4:14-15. What was Nehemiah's advice to his people in response to the fear tactics they were facing?

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6a. Do you feel under spiritual attack in your workplace, university or extended family? Is it causing you anxiety?

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Take a moment to share and have your group or mentor pray for you.

7. Meditate on Nehemiah 4:16-17. Notice the passage states of the Jews they "did their work with one hand and held a weapon with another." Could this be used as a spiritual analogy? What is a Christian's sword? (Eph. 6:17)

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7a. What is a Christian's work? (1 Cor. 15:58)

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7b. Why should we combine serving God in ministry and fighting with the sword of the Spirit?

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8. Read Nehemiah 4:18-20. Here Nehemiah gives further strategic military instruction. But where is his primary confidence for victory placed?

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Chapter 4 of Nehemiah teaches us some tremendous principles to put into practice when faced with opposition:

- A. When attacked, prayer is your first weapon (Neh. 4:4-5).
- B. When attacked, persevere with all your heart (Neh. 4:6).
- C. When attacked, take strategic action (Neh. 4: 9, 13, 21).
- D. Know that Satan wants to drain your strength for ministry (Neh. 4:10).
- E. Know that Satan uses verbal attacks to discourage you (Neh. 4:11-12).
- F. Victory comes when we push aside fear and focus on God (Neh. 4:14-15).

- G. Victory comes when we combine ministry and the sword of the Spirit (Neh. 4:16-17, Eph 6:17, 1 Cor. 15:58).
- H. Victory comes when we have faith that God will fight for us! (Neh. 4:20).

Focus on one or two of these areas each and pray for your church, protecting it from spiritual attack and asking the Holy Spirit for victory.

If anyone in the group wants prayer regarding one of these principles in their life take some to let them explain and as a group pray for them.

## Study Notes: