

# Defeating Distractions

Nehemiah 4 & 5

February 14, 2016

**I had only been at the church for a few weeks**, one evening I arrived to meet with the worship team after their practice, Instead of the music I expected to hear as I was entering the sanctuary, **I was met by one of the singers, storming out of the door**, she said to me “and we will be leaving the church.”

**She had a difference of opinion with the worship leader**, and didn't think that he was listening to her, so she was out. I did get them to reconcile, sort of. **She didn't leave the church**, but didn't go back to singing on the worship team. During the next year Kathy could be heard **grumbling about the music, and making disparaging remarks about the director**. I even had to talk with her a couple of times about that critical spirit.

Sometimes people aren't happy with what is happening in the church, **Do you think that is true?** Sometimes the evaluation is fair, and they have identified a problem. **Sometimes those with the criticisms** don't express that in a very good way. Other times, too often, **they are trouble makers, even wolves in sheep's clothing** within the body of Christ. This is true in many areas of our lives, not just the church. **We may face opposition.**

We've noticed this already in Nehemiah's story. Let's focus in on it here in chapter 4. **They began their insidious attack as soon as Nehemiah had permission** to go to Jerusalem, and have continued to find ways to attack this work.

**Who are these guys, anyway?**

**Why are they so adamant against this project?**

Nehemiah 2:10 Sanballat, governor of Beth Horan, a Samaritan Stronghold Tobiah an official from Ammon  
2:19 Geshem representing the Arabs to the south

**Chapter 4 we also find**, The Ammonites, the people of Ashdod, and **the rest of our enemies.**

The gangs all here. **Bullies hang together**      **Trouble makers prefer back up**

**What we have here are the political leaders, representing the ethnic diversity surrounding the people of God.** In it's entire history, ancient and modern, Israel has not really known peace, and Jerusalem in particular **is a city divided, even to this day.**

This group, especially Sanballat, Tobiah & Geshem, who seem to be the ring leaders, **wish to hinder the Jewish people, God's people from reestablishing themselves** in their homeland, for the purpose of subjugating and exploiting them.

**What was their motivation?**

It's kind of the same old story, **that those in power wish to keep that power, and** those that have, want more, **even at the expense of the have nots.**

We see that struggle in every area of our lives. There are those who desire power by any means, there are those who are bullies and will oppress others for any reason, or for no reason.

There are troublemakers, and oppressors in every environment. **Have you experienced that in your life?**

**There are many reasons why people cause conflict.**

They feel excluded

They have their own agenda

They are suspicious of others motivation

They are **Jealous** of other's work  
They are **Threatened** by other's success  
They simply resist all change  
They fear the loss of personal stature or position  
They are a part of satanic opposition  
To stop a work of God

### **Just to name a few**

It appears that these men were concerned for their own positions of wealth, power and control. **They were happy with things as they were.** They also represent many of Israel's most consistent and aggressive enemies. **They were actively working against the purpose and people of God.**

**There will always be opposition to God's work!** From the inside, as well as the outside.

**One great theologian said,** "The Bible tells us to love our neighbors and to love our enemies, probably because they are often the same people!"

**Someone once said,** If everything seems to be going well, you've obviously overlooked something.

All of those motivations continue to exist. **It isn't the right thing, in SOMEONEs eyes?** It's never good enough, someone will find something to criticize! No matter how careful you try to be, or how sure you feel about your decision, no matter how good or right is the plan **Opposition will rear it's ugly head! Where God is at work, the enemy is also at work!** When people take kingdom priorities seriously, **Satan stirs up agitators seeking to block the work of God.**

**The methods used by the opposition will be all too familiar to most of us. Sad to say, they continue to be alive and well in our world today.**

They didn't mind their own business "**They were disturbed**" **Nehemiah 2:10**

**They mocked, ridiculed & accused Nehemiah 2:19,** Verbal assault "Sticks & stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me!"

**Criticized and sought to undermine Nehemiah 4:2,** "What are these feeble Jews doing?"

**Scoffed at their Ambitions** "Will they restore their wall?"

**Mocked their Optimism** "Will they offer sacrifices?"

**Lampooned their Enthusiasm** "Will they finish in a day?"

**Undermined their Confidence** "Can they bring stones back to life?"

**Threatened Force Nehemiah 4:8** "They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it."

Nehemiah 6, They Schemed and lied **How did God's people respond?** Not so well

Nehemiah 4: 10-12 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." Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." Fatigue, Fear, Burnout, Frustration, Discouragement

How does Nehemiah, **our wonderful leader,** deal with The opposition & the impact on the people?

## He brought their focus on God

Nehemiah 2:20 “I answered them by saying, “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.”

This should just be a regular part of our lives. We are to “pray without ceasing.” “meditate on God’s word day and night.” **So it should be as natural as breathing, that we seek God’s wisdom and direction with all issues in our lives.** This is a great way to deal with whatever the issue is in your life.

Nehemiah prayed in response to the initial need.  
He prayed before he spoke to the King  
He prayed in chapter 4:4,5 in direct response to the opposition.

## We cannot accomplish God’s work without God’s power!

The reality is, we cannot live our lives to the maximum without the power of God as our source. **Always seek to do God’s things in God’s way.**

## Nehemiah also motivated and engaged the people.

Remember, we have emphasized that even the best leaders can’t accomplish the task by themselves, it is a team effort. Scripture tells us in **Ephesians 4:12**, the work of a Pastor is to “**equip God’s people to do the work of the ministry.**” I believe that is the task of leadership in the church. To equip means to identify, train, empower and encourage **the people of the church to be effective and successful in ministry.**

**Nehemiah first, sees reality.** He gathers information, seeks to understand what is really happening, then he speaks truth.

Nehemiah 4:14, 15 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 families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”<sup>15</sup> When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.

Too often problems are ignored, minimized, or not recognized at all. **Knowledge is power. Bring the problems into the light,** find biblical principles and commands that apply. **Nehemiah identified the issues.**

He recognized the danger of attacks from the enemy,  
**He reprioritizes the work.**  
He stations armed guards for protection.  
And he Equips and encourages the workers by bringing their focus to the Lord.

So it was kind of a tough year working with that Worship Leader. **He was young, 22,** “he believed he knew everything.” I’m not sure that he was aware that some music was written before the year 2000. Not everyone cared for his style.

**I thought about getting rid of him.** But he was there when I got there, he grew up in the church, and his parents were still in the church. **So it was a bit tricky.** I thought that the Christian thing to do, and the politically correct thing was to make it work. **I wanted to mentor this young man and he was a good music guy.**

It finally came to a head when Easter Sunday started **with a rock and roll guitar solo and a song that was not really a church song at all,** and there wasn’t really any Easter music in the service. In 9 months, he wasn’t really cooperating, and he wasn’t really growing into the position.

**Within a couple of months, he was gone.** We ended up with a really wonderful replacement, and the church survived. The key is, you must do the right thing, to, and live in the way that God directs.

This has been a pretty easy church to serve as your Interim. **Not so many difficulties or difficult people.** But I think we have done some good ministry together. Moving forward, in the months and years to come, **more building and rebuilding will take place.** There will be much potential for **distractions, opposition and conflict.** Remember Nehemiah's pattern.

Understand and communicate reality.

Seek God's principles and direction.

Prioritize & reprioritize

Put resources to what is most important.

Inspire, encourage & engage the people of the church.

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji  
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