



## **OVERCOMING OPPOSITION**

### **Nehemiah 4:1-23**

- **We're learning from the decisions and actions of Nehemiah how to get on the pathway to success in every area of our lives (Nehemiah 1-3).**
- Nehemiah - *"When Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the work was going ahead and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion."* (Nehemiah 4:7-8)
- **Opposition is something we'll have to deal with in pursuing the Steps To Success.**
- Jesus - *"Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted Me, naturally they will persecute you."* (John 15:19-20)
- Paul - *"I will be staying here at Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost. There is a wide-open door for a great work here, although many oppose me."* (1 Corinthians 16:9)
- **We should not be surprised when opposition arises, particularly as we're pursuing God's purposes and plans for our lives (Ephesians 6:10-13, Acts 17:1-6).**
- ***What are some steps we can take to respond to and overcome opposition?***

#### ***To Overcome Opposition We Need To:***

#### **RECOGNIZE THE TACTICS OF OUR OPPOSITION**

- **Sometimes People Attack Us By *Ridiculing Us.***
  - Nehemiah - *"Sanballat was very angry when he learned that we were rebuilding the wall. He flew into a rage and mocked the Jews, saying in front of his friends and the Samaritan army officers, 'What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they're doing? Do they think they can build the wall in a single day by just offering a few sacrifices? Do they actually think they can make something of stones from a rubbish heap - and charred ones at that?'"* (Nehemiah 4:1-2)
  - **Ridicule is a tactic of the Devil and devilish people, and is often successful because it attacks our sense of self-worth.**
  - **People who ridicule us are afraid of losing control or having us succeed.**

- *“Tobiah the Ammonite, who was standing beside him, remarked, ‘That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it!’”* (Nehemiah 4:3)
- **Ridicule is contagious; it will encourage others to join in attacking us.**
- **Sometimes People Attack Us By Rallying Others Against Us**
  - Nehemiah - *“When Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the work was going ahead and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion.”* (Nehemiah 4:7-8)
- **Sometimes People Attack Us By Spreading Rumors About Us.**
  - Nehemiah - *“Meanwhile, our enemies were saying, ‘Before they know what’s happening, we will swoop down on them and kill them and end their work.’ The Jews who lived near the enemy came and told us again and again, ‘They will come from all directions and attack us!’”* (Nehemiah 4:11-12)
  - **The quickest way to start a rumor is to “feed on other people’s fears.”**
  - **We need to remember that rumors are always spread by those closest to the enemy, and they are always exaggerated when they are repeated.**
- **What are some ways people have attacked me with their words or actions?**

**To Overcome Opposition We Must:**

### **REALIZE THE EFFECTS OF THE OPPOSITION**

- Nehemiah - *“Then the people of Judah began to complain, ‘The workers are getting tired, and there is so much rubble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves.’ Meanwhile, our enemies were saying, ‘Before they know what’s happening, we will swoop down on them and kill them and end their work.’”* (Nehemiah 4:10-11)
- **Opposition brings discouragement to people, and we’re most prone to become discouraged when we’re struggling with fatigue, frustration, failure or fear.**
- **What has been contributing to the discouragement I’ve experienced in my life?**
- **We must remember that our opposition wants to keep us from doing God’s will - building a strong life, a strong family, a strong career and/or a strong church.**

**To Overcome Opposition We Must:**

### **RESPOND TO ATTACKS FROM THE OPPOSITION**

- **Our Response To Opposition Should Be To Step Up Our Prayer Life.**
  - Nehemiah - *“Then I prayed, ‘Hear us, our God, for we are being mocked. May their scoffing fall back on their own heads, and may they themselves become captives in a foreign land! Do not ignore their guilt. Do not blot out their sins, for they have provoked You to anger here in front of the builders.’”* (Nehemiah 4:4-5)
  - **When we’re attacked by others we shouldn’t respond in worldly ways, but we should instead turn to the Lord and receive direction from Him.**
  - *“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.”* (Proverbs 26:4)
  - **The greater the opposition, the more we need to pray and depend on God, “talking it out” with the Lord rather than “taking it out” on others.**

- Paul - *“We were overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. . . . But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God . . . And He did rescue us from mortal danger, and He will rescue us again.”* (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)
- **Our Response To Opposition Should Be To *Prop Up Our Defenses.***
  - Nehemiah - *“They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion. But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.”* (Nehemiah 4:8-9)
  - **When opposition intensifies we need to pray on God’s Armor (Ephesians 6:10-20) and take steps to protect ourselves, our family and our Church.**
- **Our Response To Opposition Should Be To *Shore Up Our Weak Points.***
  - Nehemiah - *“So I placed armed guards behind the lowest parts of the wall in the exposed areas. I stationed the people to stand guard by families, armed with swords, spears, and bows.”* (Nehemiah 4:13)
  - **What are the “weak points” in my life, family, business or ministry?**
  - **Successful people know where they are vulnerable and reinforce that area.**
  - **When people are in “small groups” (i.e. *Life Groups*) they are less vulnerable to the attack of the enemy (Nehemiah 4:13).**
  - *“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 4:12)
  - **We should never fight a “battle” alone, but always get support from others.**
- **Our Response To Opposition Should Be To *Build Up Our People.***
  - Nehemiah - *“Then as I looked over the situation, I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!’”* (Nehemiah 4:14)
  - **The Devil wants us to focus on the opposition and be fearful, but if we will focus on the Lord we will have confidence and experience victory.**
  - *“The Lord is my light and my salvation - so why should I be afraid? The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble? When evil people come to devour me, when my enemies and foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will not be afraid. Even if I am attacked, I will remain confident.”* (Psalm 27:1-3)
- **Our Response To Opposition Should Be To *Toughen Up Our Resolve.***
  - Nehemiah - *“When our enemies heard that we knew of their plans and that God had frustrated them, we all returned to our work on the wall.”* (Nehemiah 4:15)
  - *“We worked early and late, from sunrise to sunset. And half the men were always on guard.”* (Nehemiah 4:21)
  - **When the going gets tough, the “tough get going.”**
  - **Our opposition wants to stir up trouble and stop our work, so we should never give in to the oppositions goals and plans (Nehemiah 4:8, 11).**
  - **What or who have I been tempted to “give up on”?**
  - **A fundamental principle of the Christian life is DON’T EVER GIVE UP!**

- **Opposition will discourage us but when we're prepared for it we will be victorious.**
- Nehemiah - *"Then I explained to the nobles and officials and all the people, 'The work is very spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. When you hear the blast of the trumpet, rush to wherever it is sounding. Then our God will fight for us!'"* (Nehemiah 4:19-20)
- **We can only overcome our opposition when we stay connected with other believers (i.e. *Life Groups*) and when our reliance is on the Lord.**
- Nehemiah - *"During this time, none of us . . . ever took off our clothes. We carried our weapons with us at all times, even when we went for water."* (Nehemiah 4:23)
- **We must arm ourselves daily with God's Armor (Ephesians 6:13-17) and Artillery (Ephesians 6:17, Acts 16:18, Revelation 12:11) to overcome our opposition.**
- *"Despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us."* (Romans 8:37)
- Jesus - *"God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are My followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven."* (Matthew 5:11-12)

#### **QUESTIONS TO THINK AND PRAY ABOUT**

- **What types of opposition have I been dealing with lately?**
- **What principles do I need to implement in order to overcome life's opponents?**
- **How can dealing with and overcoming opposition make me better and stronger?**