

## DISCUSSION GUIDE :: SESSION 6

**A NATION RESTORED  
BUILDING SOMETHING TOGETHER  
NEHEMIAH 4:15-23  
03/05/2017**



### MAIN POINT

All believers are gifted for service, and we need each other to complete the mission Christ has given us.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**When have you been a part of a group or team where all the participants worked together for a common goal?**

**What were one or two roadblocks the group encountered in working to complete the goal? How were the roadblocks overcome?**

To a great extent, the Book of Nehemiah is the story of God's people rebuilding a wall. It wasn't just any wall, however. The broken-down wall around Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah was both a symbol and a symptom of disgrace for God's people. A number of survivors and descendants of those who had witnessed the wall's destruction at the hands of the Babylonian army in 586 B.C. had now returned to the promised land and to Jerusalem. The Lord's temple had been rebuilt, although many who remembered the splendor of the previous temple wept at the sight of the new, less elaborate place of worship. Worse still, the trash piles of rubble along the perimeter of the city constantly reminded the people of the past, of God's judgment against His wayward people. How could they feel secure, how could they find hope for the future, as long as the wall around Jerusalem lay in ruins?

Nehemiah was still living in exile when messengers from Judah brought the news to him about Jerusalem's situation of despair. By God's favor, Nehemiah had risen to become the Persian king's cupbearer, or personal attendant. As such, he was probably set for life. He walked the halls of power in the world's capital. Yet he couldn't escape the tug in his heart that the Lord God of Israel had prepared and positioned him for this precise moment—not to bask in personal success but to take on the daunting task of leading God's people to rebuild their wall.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ NEHEMIAH 4:15.**

**Why do you think "enemies" arose and tried to stop the work that Nehemiah and God's people were engaged in?**

**When have you seen external opposition arise against something that a Christian group believes God wants them to do or build? How did the group respond to the opposition?**

## **Which hinders you more in doing something for the Lord: external criticism or internal fears? Why?**

Almost as soon as God's people began their work on the wall around Jerusalem, opponents to the project emerged and tried to disrupt it. These opponents were non-Jewish people from areas surrounding Judah who did not want to see the Jews regain any level of power or prominence in the promised land. They first tried mockery (4:1-5). When God's people showed determination to keep working even in the face of ridicule (4:6), the opponents conspired together and threatened to carry out violent attacks. Nehemiah took steps to prepare God's people to defend themselves and to trust in their "great and awe-inspiring Lord" (4:14)

### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ NEHEMIAH 4:16-18.**

---

**How would you characterize the various types of workers identified in these verses? (Hint: Some groups might be represented by only one individual.)**

**In what ways were the groups dependent on one another for success?**

**Do you consider yourself to work better alone or as part of a group in serving the Lord? What are some advantages to serving the Lord as part of a group of believers? What are some possible challenges?**

Nehemiah organized his task force of God's people so that the laborers felt protected and the work kept progressing. A strategy of defense and a plan of communication were put in place to respond to emergency needs. If each worker stayed alert and did his job, the work could continue. Every worker was important; everyone was needed. As they trusted one another and proved trustworthy in the face of challenges, not only a stone wall but also a tremendous bond of spiritual unity would rise higher and higher among the people of God (see 1 Cor. 12:18-26).

### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ NEHEMIAH 4:19-20.**

---

**How does the command "All hands on deck!" describe Nehemiah's leadership approach in the situation surrounding the rebuilding of the wall?**

**When have you seen your church display an "all hands on deck" response to a crucial need or plan? How did church leaders seek to gain full participation and engagement in the work? What was the result?**

Nehemiah wanted all of the people to invest themselves fully in the great work the Lord have given them to do. Showing great leadership, Nehemiah identified the threats, communicated a plan of success, and motivated the people to trust in the Lord even as they "passed the ammunition."

### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ NEHEMIAH 4:21-23.**

---

**What can participants do to stay focused on a task until completion? How did Nehemiah lead by example in helping the people of Jerusalem complete the wall?**

**How do you see your church's leaders setting the example for serving the Lord? How can you encourage other believers to stay focused on serving the Lord in and through your church?**

Nehemiah urged the people working on the wall not to become distracted or discouraged. He asked those who lived outside

Jerusalem to stay in the city at night rather than to return to their homes. This strategy bolstered the city's defenses and also kept any fearful or discouraged workers from deserting during the night. Nehemiah did not ask his workers to do anything that he would not do. Ever the effective leader, he, along with his family and closest advisors, set the example of staying focused on the task all the way through to completion.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What are one or two takeaways you have gained from this study that apply to your church and its ministry in the community?**

**What are one or two takeaways that speak personally to you in regard to your service to the Lord?**

**What do you tend to do "with all your heart": work, worry, worship, or warfare? Why?**

**What is one area of your life in which there seems to be brokenness and rubble? In what ways can you cooperate with others and trust in the Lord to build something great out of that brokenness and rubble?**

## PRAY

Guide the group to enter a season of prayer: 1) confessing any fears or hesitancy to join God's Spirit in building something great in their lives and in the church; 2) committing to use their spiritual gifts, talents, abilities, and possessions in practical service in the Lord's name; and 3) trusting the Lord with all their hearts as they act boldly to unitedly build something together.

## COMMENTARY

### NEHEMIAH 4:15-23

---

4:15-17 As the work resumed, Nehemiah took precautions against a surprise attack. He divided the group he called my men (Hb ne'aray; lit "my youths"), which may have been a militia that supported Nehemiah's role as governor. Half of them joined in the work while the other half were on guard duty.

4:18-22 Because the defenders were spread so thinly around the city, Nehemiah had the trumpeter beside him, so they could concentrate their forces quickly in case of attack. Having everyone spend the night inside Jerusalem not only bolstered the defenses of the city but also kept the discouraged or the fearful from deserting during the night.

4:23 Nehemiah and his military entourage set the example for diligence in the face of danger: [we] never took off our clothes. Another possibility for understanding the final phrase of the verse is to read the last word of the Hebrew text (hammayim; "the water") as "the right hand" (Hb hayyamin), making the phrase, "each his weapon in his right hand." Nehemiah and his people in this chapter exemplify the Benedictine credo, (Lat) ora et labora ("pray and work"). They sought God's blessing and His protection while working with the strength He gave them to accomplish the task for which they prayed.

## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Nehemiah 5:1-13; Nehemiah 6:1-14; Nehemiah 7:1-4