

Intimidation & Job Done!

Nehemiah 6

Small Group Study, week commencing 18th October 2021.

For Starters

It is sometimes said that for most runners, the hardest mile during the marathon is between the 18th and 23rd mile. Why do you think that is?

Read

Nehemiah 6.

Context

The work on the wall is nearly done. It is likely that, like the runners in a marathon, everyone involved in the building project was physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted. Perhaps some had 'hit the wall', taken over by feelings of fatigue and loss of energy. There is one last throw of the dice for the enemies of the Jews – a series of personal attacks on Nehemiah. As on the battlefields of another age, if the general falls, the troops will follow.

Study

Verses 1-15

1. There are three waves of personal attacks against Nehemiah: verses 1-4, 5-9, and 10-15. What shape did these attacks take? How did Nehemiah counter them?
2. It is disturbing to read of the prophets Shemaiah (verse 12), Noadiah (verse 14) and others playing their part in seeking to intimidate Nehemiah. How do you think Nehemiah recognised them as false prophets?
3. It can be troubling when someone claims to speak from God against what we are doing. John encourages us to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 1:4). How, in practice, do we do this?

Detour!

Some groups may find it constructive to take a detour and look more closely at the question of false prophets. Peter wrote, "there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1), and someone has identified seven traits of false prophets today which are worth consideration.

- Different Source — Where does the message come from? (2 Peter 1:16)
- Different Message — What is the substance of the message? (2 Peter 1:3)
- Different Position — In what position will the message leave you? (2 Peter 1:4)
- Different Character — What kind of people does the message produce? (2 Peter 1:5)
- Different Appeal — Why should you listen to the message? (2 Peter 1:19)
- Different Fruit — What result does the message have in people's lives? (2 Peter 1:8)

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- Different End — Where does the message ultimately lead you? (2 Peter 1:11)

Verses 16-19

4. Job done (verse 15)! To what is the success of the project attributed? What successes might you have had recently “with the help of our God”? Have you given him thanks?

5. As with any building work, there is some snagging work to do! The problems outlined in verses 17-19 were unlikely to go away, as Tobiah was an official in neighbouring Ammon, but Nehemiah could now turn his main attention to other things (7:1-3). What are some of your recurring niggles? What are your tactics for dealing with them?

6. Reflect back on Nehemiah 1-6. What are the key things you will take away from this first half of the book? What will you do differently?

Prayer

Remind yourself of a key element of Nehemiah’s success, reflected in these verses below.

- For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven (1:4);
- Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night (1:6);
- Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name (1:11);
- I prayed to the God of heaven (2:4);
- We prayed to our God and posted a guard (4:9);
- But I prayed, ‘Now strengthen my hands’ (6:9).

Turn to God in prayer.

Resources

In addition to the Blog posts, all small group studies can also be located in chichesterbaptist.org/smallgroupresources. The Blog posts will continue to be posted on the Sunday preceding the message, but the studies may be available sooner from this page.