

SESSION 6

CONSPIRACY, COMPLETION AND RECORD KEEPING

Nehemiah 6-7 / Personal Study

Opening Prayer

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son. Amen.

Introduction

With order restored among the Hebrews, Nehemiah's attention turns once again to the completion of the wall. The wall is virtually complete, but there will be a final effort on the opposition's part to halt it by harming, intimidating and discrediting Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's character is tested to its utmost on the eve of this great accomplishment for God – not once, but three times. A man less concerned with God's opinion may have given in to the desires of those around him, those who opposed the work. Opposition to our character is often a test far greater than any physical or academic challenge, especially when our enemies attempt to deceive and derail us by intrigue and seemingly good proposals. But Nehemiah's singleness of purpose and loyalty to God alone serve as a shield for him in this final showdown.

As the main conflict resolves, God compels Nehemiah to register the people in a clear and orderly manner. The purpose is to repopulate Jerusalem.

Read Nehemiah 6-7 and answer the following questions:

1. As the rebuilding project nears completion, what final threats does Nehemiah face from Sanballat, Tobiah and their cohorts?
2. What does the proposed meeting claim to be (6:7)? Why does Nehemiah suspect otherwise?
3. Even if the meeting were sincere or well-intentioned, how does Nehemiah not let the "good" distract him from the "better"? What better purpose keeps him from accepting the invitation to meet?
4. Why does Sanballat send an "open letter" instead of a sealed letter? (6:5-7) What impact is the unsealed letter intended to have on the public at large? On the ruling of the Persian king? What is Nehemiah's response?
5. What is the prophecy of Shemaiah intended to do? How does Nehemiah discern that Shemaiah is a false prophet? Note: Only priests can enter the sanctuary at this time (Num. 18:7).

6. Jerusalem's walls lay in neglect for over a century and a half. Amazingly, Nehemiah completes the job in just two months. Look back at 6:15-16. How does Nehemiah's matter-of-fact report of the wall's completion shed light on the kind of man he is?

7. Why does Nehemiah list the returned exiles?

How should the fact that the Bible lists people by name reassure you? Look up Luke 10:20 to help with your answer.

8. Whom does God use to contribute to the rebuilding (7:70-72)? What does this say about each person's role in God's plan?

9. In chapters 6 and 7, Nehemiah demonstrates wisdom and humility. What areas of your life would benefit from exercising more of these two things?

Closing Prayer

Our Father in heaven, Your name is holy. Forgive us for the times that we have wilted under pressure rather than clinging in truth to You. Thank You for forgiveness and Your gracious preservation in the midst of trials and difficulties. Thank You for the example of Nehemiah's wisdom and humility. Thank You for Your Son who modeled these perfectly. Keep us in Your love and strengthen us to walk in faithful obedience to You. In Christ's name and for His sake. Amen.

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Answer the following questions:

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions? Was there anything you wanted to study further?

Read Nehemiah 6-7 and answer the following questions:

3. What are your thoughts on the opening verses of chapter 6? What practical wisdom can we take from Nehemiah's response to his enemies?
4. What makes Nehemiah persistently refuse to confer with those who keep requesting a meeting? What makes the proposal to meet attractive? How does Nehemiah's handling of this event contrast with Eve's folly in Genesis 3:1-5?
5. Which questions do you toy with that should never be considered?
6. Nehemiah stays focused on the "better" thing instead of being distracted by a potentially "good" thing. In doing good for the cause of Christ, when have you been tempted to settle for second best or good enough?
7. Nehemiah discerns that Sanballat and Shemaiah are dealing falsely with him. How does a Christian discern between truth and error? Look up the following verses to help with your answer: Romans 12:2, James 1:5 and John 10:27.
8. Nehemiah's rebuilding of the wall represents an enormous accomplishment. When the Lord grants you great favor and success, how do you respond in your thoughts, words and actions? What temptation to sin do we face in those times?
9. Nehemiah repeatedly turns to prayer when his enemies assert themselves. What difficulty are you currently facing that could benefit from greater prayerfulness? What activity have you been practicing in place of prayer?

Guide to Prayer

- *Thank the Lord for His faithfulness to His name and therefore to those called by His name.*
- *Confess your fears and failures and ask Him to forgive your sins.*
- *Ask the Lord to guide you in wisdom to know when to sacrifice what is good for what is even better.*

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 6

Conspiracy, Completion and Record Keeping / Nehemiah 6-7

1. *Personal response*
2. *Personal response*
3. *Nehemiah refused to sacrifice the better thing for the lesser, which showed a prioritization of his efforts and affections. Often our intentionality and kingdom perspective are compromised by pursuing neutral or even good things rather than the greatest thing.*
4. *Nehemiah would not be swayed from the work God told him to do. No doubt the proposal to meet was attractive because it might result in a peaceable agreement, assuming Sanballat's motives were pure. Whereas Eve allowed the whispers of her enemy into her mind and heart, Nehemiah refused to even allow a foothold. Compare this to Christ who quickly and decisively resisted temptation in the desert (Matt. 4).*
5. *Personal response*
6. *Personal response*
7. *By testing according to the Word of God and being sensitive to the leading of the Spirit (who never contradicts the Word since He inspired it). Romans 12:2 by the renewing of our minds, James 1:5 by asking God for wisdom, John 10:27 by recognizing the voice of our Shepherd (this happens through familiarity with the Scriptures).*
8. *We are often tempted to take credit for what God has accomplished through us.*
9. *We often replace prayerfulness with worry or activity that enhances our illusion of control.*