

Broken Down Walls
Leading Through Discouragement - Nehemiah 4
July 24 & 25, 2010

Leadership is tough. Leading, while surrounded with discouragement is even tougher.

How do you lead a team that's discouraged? How do you lead yourself when you're discouraged? How do you continue to lead when everyone around you is discouraged?

Sources of discouragement:

Loss, regrets, failing health, shattered dreams, unmet expectations, fractured relationships, challenges of each new stage of life, daily news – the economy, war, oil spill, violence

Sources of Nehemiah's discouragement:

- Nearby governors – Sanballat, Tobiah, Arabs, leaders in Ashdod.

***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?"*

***Tobiah** the Ammonite, who was standing beside him, remarked, "That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it!" (verses 1-3)*

- Workers overwhelmed, death threats, people were in a panic

*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.**"*

*The **Jews who lived near the enemy** came and told us **again and again**, "They will come from **all directions and attack us!**" (verses 10 – 12)*

I lead myself and others through discouragement when just like Nehemiah...

I cling to God in prayer

*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."But **we prayed** to our God.... (verses 4-5 ,9)*

- 11% of the verses in Nehemiah are prayers.
- How am I doing in connecting with God through prayer?
- Expressing my dependence, not just asking for stuff

I take practical steps

...” we prayed to our God **and** guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.” (verse 9)

- There is much you can’t control but don’t overlook the specific steps God is asking you to take.
- What are those steps?
- Pray and obediently take those steps.

I remind myself and others of God’s greatness

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!” (verse 14)

- Read the promises of God.
- Share stories of His greatness.

I communicate often in a crisis

Then as I looked over the situation, **I called together the nobles and the rest of the people** and said to them...**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.” (verses 14, 19 – 20)

- Leaders don’t fear stating the obvious.
- Ignore this and others will fill in the blanks.

I surrender my comfort

We **worked** early and late, from sunrise to sunset. And half the men were always on guard. During this time, none of us—**not I**, nor my relatives, nor my servants, nor the guards who were with me—ever took off our clothes. We carried our weapons with us at all times, even when we went for water. (verses 21 – 23)

- Will you be a servant leader who leads by example?
- Nehemiah led God’s people through discouraging times to rebuild a wall in 52 days
- The wall had been in ruins for around 150 years.

Passages to meditate on this week:

Monday - Psalm 103:10-12
Thursday - Philippians 4:19

Tuesday - Matthew 11:28
Friday - Proverbs 18:10

Wednesday - Colossians 1:14
Saturday - 2 Peter 1:3