



NG Study Guide: Nehemiah 6:1-19 :: “Response to Completion” [9.1.24]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Regularly review the notes at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: As followers of The Lord in Christ, God has not only saved us, but called us into participation in the work that He is doing in the world. God Himself has prepared this work for His people (Ephesians 2:10), and throughout Scripture, the Lord promises to bless His work, bless His people as they seek to accomplish His work, and prosper and establish work done for Him. Followers of Christ affirm and believe those truths, and yet there are times while serving that our experience doesn't line up with what we know to be true. Even in the midst of participating in the Lord's work, we may experience discouragement, from ourselves (our flesh), from others (the world), and from the devil. How can we remain faithful to continue participating in the Lord's work, when we might interpret a discrepancy between what we know to be true and our felt experience? In chapter 6, Nehemiah and God's people enter into the completion phase of rebuilding Jerusalem's wall. And even at that time, opposition against the work continues to attempt to discourage and discredit him. By observing Nehemiah, we understand how we can remain faithful in continuing the work the Lord has laid in front of us, even in the midst of opposing forces. By continuing in the Lord's work, we bear witness to the Goodness and Character of our God.

Subject: Nehemiah Completes the Rebuilding the Wall

Object: Continue the Lord's Work unto Completion

Context: Jerusalem's walls have been in ruin for a century and a half, but overcoming tremendous obstacles, Nehemiah and the people approach completion of the work that began construction just 52 days earlier. In an attempt to halt the work, opposition now aims their sights personally on Nehemiah, and Nehemiah is in a position where he must continue even in the midst of obstacles right before completion.

A. Continue in the Midst of Discouragement (1-7)

1. The enemy attempts to draw you away from the safety of God and His people (1-3) *Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm. 3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?"* These three men (Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem) have been opposing the completion of the city wall from the outset. Until this point, they have tried various tactics to oppose the work as a whole, but now seeing that only the gate doors remain needing to be hung up before the wall is complete, they contrive the idea to harm Nehemiah outside of the city. They attempt to draw him approximately 25 miles away from Jerusalem to the plain of Ono, where Nehemiah would be vulnerable to ambush or assassination (3). As God's followers, Satan will attempt similar tactics with us. *The enemy will attempt to draw us away from the safety of God and His people.* Nehemiah responds to this by expressing that the work God has called him to is too great for Nehemiah to pause to meet with the three men. The Lord protected Nehemiah from harm by keeping him focused on the value of the work He had called him to. In the

same way, when we *remain focused on the Lord's work*, The Lord strengthens us to continue to remain faithful in what He has called us to.

2. The enemy will persist in attempts to discourage (4) *But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.* Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem attempt to draw Nehemiah to the villages in the plain of Ono. Nehemiah continually insists that the work of the Lord is too important to pause and leave behind. By recognizing that the temptation of the enemy does not happen just occasionally, but continually, we are better poised to continue to follow the Lord steadfastly, rather than become surprised and discouraged at the persistence of opposition to God.

B. Continue in the Midst of Discrediting (5-14) *5 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written: It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king. 7 And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, "There is a king in Judah!" Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore, and let us consult together. 8 Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart." 9 For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done." Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. 10 Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was a secret informer; and he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you."*

1. Meet falsehood with Truth (5-8) Sanballat changes tactics and sends a servant with an open letter to Nehemiah. Typically, letters would be bound and sealed, so by the "open" nature of the letter, it is easily presumed that this letter was meant to be publicly available. In it, Sanballat attempts to discredit Nehemiah as a person in 3 manners. First, he attempts to misrepresent Nehemiah's intentions, claiming that Nehemiah attempts to be a king for Judah (6). Second, he attempts to attack Nehemiah's reputation, claiming that he has appointed prophets to declare him king, painting him as a rebel against Artaxerxes (7). Third, a secret informer (Shemiah) is sent to Nehemiah to lure him into the temple (where only priests are allowed) with the lie that there are attempts being made at Nehemiah's life (10). The false offer of help covered up ulterior motives against Nehemiah and the Lord's work. Nehemiah discerns these lies, and addresses them in verse 8, revealing the truth that these were all fabricated in the minds of Nehemiah's opposition. By leaning into what is true (both factually and Biblically), the Lord equips us to stand against false attempts at discrediting that can be made against us while we pursue following God.

2. Meet intimidation with determination (9) *9 For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done." Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.* Nehemiah prayed, relying on the Lord's strength to help him continue, even as opposition attempted to "weaken their hands" (discourage and discredit). Nehemiah met attempts at intimidation with determination, by relying on the Lord's strength. We are also able to draw near to the Lord for strength and resolve when we are met with intimidation or discouragement that so often occurs in the midst of serving the Lord.

3. Meet fear with value-driven courage (11-12) *11 And I said, "Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" 12 Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.* Nehemiah responds to Shemiah by further emphasizing the value of the Lord's work, and his obedience in continuing to participate in the Lord's work. Nehemiah discerned the lies Shemiah was telling him, and also recognized it was not his place to go into the temple (where entry was reserved for priests). Nehemiah valued obedience to the Lord's commands, as well as obedience to the work of rebuilding the wall, and that brought him the courage. Courage must be built on value. Recognizing the value of the ministry the Lord has led us to, helps us to take heart and persevere, by turning our focus away from the troubles and towards the benefits (in our lives, others' lives, and God's Kingdom) of following where God leads.

C. Continue unto Completion (15-19) *15 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God. 17 Also in those*

days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them. **18** For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. **19** Also they reported his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.

1. Opposition can increase as more work is accomplished (17-19) At this point, verse 15 lets readers know that the wall was finished, but verse 17 reminds readers that during that time, nobles of Judah who had familial ties to Tobiah were essentially “taking sides” with Tobiah. They noted what they viewed as Tobiah’s “good deeds” and reported Nehemiah’s words back to Tobiah (19). Opposition mounted against Nehemiah, and Tobiah continued to send letters to attempt to frighten Nehemiah. Sometimes, we can mistakenly assume that as we see more and more fruit in ministry, our experience of discouragement, criticism, intimidation, etc. might decrease, but there are times it increases, the more work is done for the Lord (John 15:18-21). As Jesus drew nearer to accomplishing His work on the cross, the resistance against Him grew. He was betrayed by a friend, falsely accused, mocked, spit on, and beaten, but He remained steadfast in His focus on accomplishing the work of our salvation (Hebrews 12:2). As we fix our eyes on Jesus, we are empowered by his Holy Spirit, even as obstacles may increase.

2. Continuing the work Testifies of God’s character (15-16) Nehemiah and the people accomplished the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s wall in only 52 days, and feat only possible by the strength of God empowering them. The work had been accomplished by God Himself. In verse 15 we read that the surrounding nations grew disheartened. The discouragement they meant for God’s people led to their own discouragement, and the wall now stood as a testimony of the power of God. Colossians 2:15 reminds us that Jesus’ accomplishment at the cross and at His resurrection, put the principalities and powers in the spiritual realm to open shame, as He proved His power over sin and death. As we continue to rely on Jesus’ power, and follow Him in the work He has prepared for us, it bears witness that our God accomplishes more than we can conceive of for His glory (Ephesians 3:20-21), that He is victorious (1 Corinthians 15:57), and that He is an ever-present help for His people (Psalm 46:1)

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. Where/in what way(s) do you sense God might be calling you to follow Him in this season?

Q2. Have there been times you’ve felt discouraged? How did the Lord help you through those times?

Q3. How can we encourage others to steadfastly follow the Lord where he leads us?

Q4. What are some actions we can take to grow in courage and endurance in following the Lord?

“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a deeper look at the events of Nehemiah as it relates to responding to criticism, and contains some helpful application for our lives:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/dealing-with-criticism-lessons-from-nehemiah/>

2. Here is a worship song that was helpful in meditating on this passage of Scripture:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/6cpaifbMb2hHeIH5pOjhbN?si=c8b95e923e6649b1>

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

Invite a neighbor from work or school to come to church with you, or visit your NG.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes

1. Preparation and participation: Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better. As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples. Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.

Next week's passage:

Nehemiah 7:1-73 :: "Response of Reaching"