

FACING OPPOSITION IN A GOOD WORK

REBUILD & REPAIR: ENGAGING THE WORLD WITH NEHEMIAH · NEHEMIAH 2:10, 19-20; 4:1-23; 6:1-14 · JULY 9, 2023 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

“But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. ‘What is this you are doing?’ they asked. ‘Are you rebelling against the king?’” (Nehemiah 2:19)

The Reality of Opposition

There will be opposition in God’s work (2:10)

Opposition may begin right away (2:10)

Opposition’s Options

Ridicule about the nature of the work (2:19; 4:1-3)

Angry threats of conflict (4:7-15)

Looking for ways to bring harm (6:1-4)

Using rumors to sow broader conflict (6:5-9)

Using others on the “inside” to get close (6:10-13)

Using words to sow discord (6:17-19)

Dealing with Opposition

Praying about opposition (1:4-11; 2:4b; 4:4-5, 9; 5:19; 6:9b, 14-15; 13:14, 22, 29, 31)

Preparing for opposition (4:9, 13-23)

Ignoring opposition as a distraction (2:10; 6:1-4)

Confronting opposition (6:8-9)

Seeing through opposition (6:10-13)

Making It Real for Us

Coming to terms with the reality of opposition

Being self-aware in relation to opposition

Maintaining perspective amidst opposition

Relying on God in opposition

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the best advice you have received about dealing with conflict or opposition?
2. This weekend at Eastbrook we continue our sermon series, “Rebuild and Repair: Engaging the World with Nehemiah,” by looking at the opposition that Nehemiah faces throughout this book. Take some time to pray, asking God to speak to you through His word.
3. *Background:* In Nehemiah 2:10, we first encounter two of Nehemiah’s chief opponents in this book: Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite. Sanballat was the governor of the region of Samaria to the east and is attested to in other documents from the same time as the Bible. Tobiah had influence within Judah but was from the Ammonite people to the east.
4. Read Nehemiah 2:10 and 2:18-20. What was the initial opposition Nehemiah faced and how did he deal with it?
5. Now read Nehemiah 4:1-23. How would you describe the progress of Nehemiah’s work and the escalating opposition Nehemiah and his coworkers faced?
6. Why do you think Sanballat and others were distressed and angered by this work?
7. Read Nehemiah 6:1-19. As the work on the wall moves toward completion, there are other types of opposition Nehemiah faces, some from the outside (6:1-9) and some from the inside (6:10-19). How would you describe this opposition?
8. What stands out to you about how Nehemiah engages, or doesn’t, with the opposition?
9. What is one thing God is speaking to you through this study? If you’re on your own, write that down, pray over it, and share it with someone this week. If you are with a small group, share your answers with one another before closing in prayer.

DIG DEEPER:

- Read through all of Nehemiah’s prayers in this book as a way to gain insight into the life of prayer amidst opposition: 1:4-11; 2:4b; 4:4-5, 9; 5:19; 6:9b, 14-15; 13:14, 22, 29, 31. Perhaps you may want to memorize one or adapt it to your circumstances.
- Take an extended time of prayer to bring areas of conflict or opposition you face to God. Name your sources of opposition, both internal and external. Ask God to grant discernment about the true nature of the situation and opposition. Ask God to speak to you about how you should deal with it, perhaps writing thoughts down in a journal. Maybe you could share your reflections with a friend or mentor for perspective and guidance.
- Consider reading one of these books: Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* or John Paul Lederach, *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*