

Icebreaker:

In this passage, Nehemiah and the people complete the wall. What is the most satisfying project you have ever completed?

Read Nehemiah 6 and discuss:

1. How did Sanballat's "open letter," verses 5-7, differ from his previous letters, verses 2-4? What threat was embedded in this letter? What did Nehemiah do and what might you have done in this situation?
2. Sanballat and Tobiah clearly try to create fear in Nehemiah before the doors were put in the gates. Is there something you haven't done in the past because you were too afraid? Does fear ever hinder you from moving forward?
3. When have you been distracted or sidetracked from doing something good? What can you use as defenses not to get sidetracked?
4. Shemaiah tries to get Nehemiah to run away and hide in the temple, verse 10. Has there been a time when someone tried to get you to do something you knew was wrong? Were you able to say no? Why or why not?
5. What lay in ruins for 140 years (Jerusalem's wall was torn down from 586 BC to 445 BC) was rebuilt in 52 days. What made this possible? Name more than one factor.
6. The statement that the wall was completed is almost anticlimactic after the buildup of the last 5 chapters. Why do you think that is?

Spiritual Practice:

Identify a theme for yourself for the week. Some suggestions are: *Choose joy; Be thankful; I belong to God.* When you get distracted this week, return to your theme and see if that helps draw you back to God. We will remind you of the practice next week, and you can share in your group how it went.

Prayer:

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

prayer requests

- > Prayers of continued healing for Theresa Beardsley, Jamie Jones, and John Lindenschmidt.

The wall is rebuilt! Time for celebrating! Not quite so fast. Nehemiah is still being threatened by his enemies even as he and his team are putting the finishing touches on the wall (doors in the gates). It would be easy for Nehemiah to be fearful or distracted. He continues to pray quickly to God for strength, and fights against the temptation to run and hide in the temple. Again, Nehemiah faces real-life obstacles and threats and must respond to them while thinking what God would have him to do.

1. The first four letters were closed and asked for a meeting, perhaps to harm Nehemiah. The fifth letter is open, meaning others can read it. The letter was spreading rumors that Nehemiah wants to be king and lead the Jewish people in rebellion. Nehemiah rejects their claims, sees that they are trying to attack his character, and asks God for strength.
2. Nehemiah could be afraid that he would be attacked or killed in one of these proposed meetings. His enemies were a real threat. Yet Nehemiah fights against his fear and does his best to stay on track. Help your group to answer if they have ever stopped something out of fear? What can we learn about fighting fear from Nehemiah?
3. Being distracted or sidetracked is a huge issue in our world with so much media, technology and real distractions. Nehemiah chooses to pray, to stay on task, and not to give in to fear. He sees God had not sent the prophet, and completes the wall. We can always choose to ask God to help us to have strength and stay on task with him.
4. Since Nehemiah was not a priest, he should not be hiding in the temple, especially if he was to go into the Holy of Holies. As a leader he should not be running away at all. Think of a time when you had to fight the temptation to do something wrong. You as a group leader might be prepared to share first.
5. There is a stark contrast between how long the wall had been down to how quickly it was rebuilt. This took teamwork, prayer, God's help, leadership, risk, and sacrifice. Many "God projects" take a group all working together and overcoming obstacles to finish the job.
6. It is anticlimactic because the Jewish people can't celebrate yet, and Nehemiah can't let down his guard, as they are still reacting to threats right up until the end. When the wall is completed however, Nehemiah says that many around them were afraid because they saw how God had helped the Jewish people rebuild the wall.

Spiritual Practice:

Even though it is fall break for many people, and your group numbers may be down, encourage your group who is there to try this practice. We will circle back to it next week so that you can review how it went.