



Nehemiah 6

DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS

Attention is under siege more than it has ever been in human history, we have more distractions than ever before, and we have to be more focused on cultivating the skills of attention. ...The more you can concentrate the better you'll do on anything, because whatever talent you have, you can't apply it if you are distracted. ...This ability is more important than IQ or the socio economic status of the family you grew up in for determining career success, financial success and health.
—Dr. Daniel Goleman, author of *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Success*

The task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem is almost complete. The finish line is in sight. And now the enemies of Jerusalem are desperate in their attempts to get Nehemiah and the people distracted, discouraged, and off track.



The operation [building the wall] was, throughout, a triumph of concentration amidst every kind of distraction. —Derek Kidner

Ancient papyri (from 4th century BC) have identified Sanballat as the governor of Samaria and have identified Tobiah with an aristocratic family with power in the region. Silver vessels from the 5th century BC have also identified Geshem the Arab as a powerful leader in the Negev of Israel and in northern Arabia.

The successful warrior is the average man with laser-like focus. —Bruce Lee

Nehemiah's utter dedication to the great enterprise of the wall made that his top priority. He refused to be distracted with lesser matters that would divert and dissipate his energies.
—Edwin Yamauchi

How easy it would have been for Nehemiah—upon the third or fourth request—to attack their motives, to accuse them of insincerity in an attempt to harm him. But he didn't. He patiently waited it out, hoping they would clearly reveal what was in their hearts—and that's exactly what happened. —Gene Getz

THE DECEPTIVE INVITATIONS (6:1-4)

When Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem heard that the wall was almost complete, with only the gates left to finish, they sent off a quick “friendly message” to Nehemiah.

- The timing was _____.
- The location was _____.
- Their persistency was _____.

Nehemiah's responses were courteous and consistent—
“Sorry but I have a _____ priority right now.”

THE DAMAGING RUMORS (6:5-9)

Sanballat sends an “open letter” meant to be “leaked” to the local press. He alleged that rumors were spreading fast that Nehemiah wanted to be king and wanted to rebel against the Persian empire.

The rumors were dangerous because they were intended to...

- Turn _____ against him.
- Turn _____ against him.
- Turn him away from his task into _____ control.

Nehemiah refuted their lies, stood on his integrity, and asked God to give him _____ to stay focused on the task.

THE DANGEROUS PROPHECY (6:10-14)

Next Nehemiah faced an unexpected ploy from a confined prophet with a prophetic oracle supposedly from God. It was a diabolical plot to catch Nehemiah in a sin and in a scandal (cf. Num. 18:7).

Nehemiah discerns the deception, identifies the false prophets and their hidden agendas, and turns it all over to God in prayer.

THE DIVIDED LOYALTIES (6:17-19)

Nehemiah faced the ongoing problem of people pledged to Tobiah through intermarriage, family relations, and perhaps business deals. Their divided loyalties were a constant thorn in his side.

But despite all of this, the wall was completed! In _____ days!

A FEW PRINCIPLES FOR TODAY

- Keep your eyes on the _____.
- Pray daily for _____.
- Know the _____.
- Stay _____ each day.

Another proof of Sanballat's dishonest intentions is that he sent an open letter, i.e., not sealed, as was the custom in those days. With the open letter, which could be read by anyone on the way, he was responsible for the further spreading of the rumor. —F. Charles Fensham

One of the characteristics of a rumor is that the source is never quoted. ...Second, a rumor is noted for its exaggeration and inaccuracy. A rumor spreads in an exaggerated fashion, and gullible listeners and gossips feed on that kind of garbage.

—Charles R. Swindoll

Their hands will be weakened in the work (6:9). Hebrew, *raphah*, “to sink down, drop, relax; to let go; to be still” (Strong).

Strengthen my hands (6:9). Hebrew, *chazaq*, “to hold fast, to make strong” (Gesenius). Used 42x in the book of Nehemiah.

No temptation comes with more force than that which comes under a color or religion, of revelation and devotion, and is brought by the hand of prophets.

—Matthew Henry

“And what man such as I could go into the temple and live?”—for Nehemiah was no priest and had no right of access to the temple itself. —Derek Kidner

The best answer to opposition is to keep working and fulfill God's will; thus others will see God's power. —Mervin Breneman

A little thing is a little thing, but faithfulness in little things is a great thing. —J. Hudson Taylor