



Sermon Discussion Guide

“The Sword and the Shovel”

Nehemiah 4-6

Summary

This week's sermon addressed the reality of opposition: When God's people rise to build, the enemy rises to oppose. Using the image of Nehemiah's builders holding a shovel in one hand and a sword in the other, we learned to persevere in the good work by staying alert to the spiritual war on three main battlefronts and implementing six defensive strategies.

The war is fought on these three fronts:

1. **Outside the Walls:** Through mockery, slander, threats, and violence from external enemies.
2. **Inside the Community:** Through corrosive sin, exploitation, and injustice that create internal rot.
3. **Within the Worker:** Through internal weariness, fatigue, doubt, and discouragement.

Our Battle Plan: Six strategies to keep building while we keep battling:

1. Fight by **Praying** (4:9)
2. Fight by **Fearing God, Not Man** (4:14)
3. Fight by **Confronting Sin** (5:6-13)
4. Fight by **Walking in Integrity** (5:15)
5. Fight by **Staying Focused** (6:3)
6. Fight by **Remembering the Lord** (4:14)

Discussion Questions

Opener

If you had a personal rival like Sanballat or Tobiah, what one ridiculous thing in your life would they mock you for? (e.g., your taste in music, your inability to fold a fitted sheet, or your Pokemon obsession).

1. Fight by Praying (Nehemiah 4:9)

Nehemiah's reflex when facing threats was prayer first, followed by action: "We prayed to our God and set a guard..."

- Nehemiah's reflex was prayer (4:9). Why is prayer often our last resort instead of our first move when opposition or fear arises?
- The sermon said, "Let every insult, every threat, every fear become a cue for prayer." What is one specific insult or fear you are currently facing that you need to make a cue for prayer this week?

2. Fight by Fearing God, Not Man (Nehemiah 4:14)

When fear spread in the camp, Nehemiah challenged the people to remember the Lord, who is great and awesome.

- Read Nehemiah 4:14 and Psalm 56:3-4. When you face mockery or opposition, how can you practically "turn up God's voice" to make Him big and the opinions of others small?
- The fear of man pressures us to do *their* will, not God's. What is one area of obedience where you are currently being tempted to compromise because of what others might think or say?

3. Fight by Confronting Sin (Nehemiah 5:6-13)

The Enemy's war is fought inside the community through sin, which eats away at the structure like termites.

- The sermon compared sin in the community to "termites chewing through the beams." What corrosive sins (gossip, distrust, or a lack of loving concern) most often erode the unity and work of the church?
- Scott said *"I wonder if the enemy would concede ground on the outside, if he could take some ground on the inside. If he would give up the advancement of the church outward into the world, if he could get a foothold in the community of God."* Agree, disagree? Discuss.

4. Fight by Walking in Integrity (Nehemiah 5:15)

Nehemiah refused to use his rights or privilege in a way that would burden the people, knowing his character was vital to the community's mission.

- Where are you tempted to use your rights or privilege in a way that creates a "heavy burden" or a poor witness to others?
- Scott said, *"God cares far more about who you are becoming than what you are building."* How does pursuing integrity directly become spiritual warfare against the Enemy's schemes?

5. Fight by Staying Focused (Nehemiah 6:3)

Sanballat tried to distract Nehemiah and get him to stop the work, but Nehemiah refused to take the detour.

- Nehemiah said, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down" (6:3). What are some ways the Enemy tries to distract you from the great work God has specifically called you to?
- Scott said, *"A prayer-backed, gift-aligned, wisely-planned 'yes' frees you up to confidently say 'no' without guilt."* How can you apply this concept to guard your time and attention?

6. Fight by Remembering the Lord (Nehemiah 4:14)

When fatigue, doubt, and discouragement set in (the battle within the worker), Nehemiah reminded the people to remember the Lord.

- When the battle within the worker is raging (fatigue, doubt, discouragement), why is the simple act of remembering the Lord (His power, His faithfulness, His finished work) an effective counter-attack?
- Nehemiah told the people to remember the Lord and "fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes" (4:14). What does "fighting" for your family or your Christian brothers/sisters look like in a practical way in this season of life?