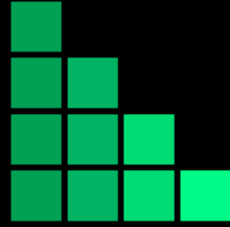


NEW LIFE ONE STUDIES



Series: “Nehemiah: Rise & Build”
Week 6 Study Guide
Message: “I’m Not Coming Down.”

SCRIPTURE

Main Text:	Cross References:
<i>Nehemiah 6</i>	<i>Ezra 4:4</i> <i>Galatians 1:10</i> <i>Mark 1:35–39</i> <i>Matthew 27:12–14</i> <i>1 Peter 2:23</i> <i>Matthew 16:24–25</i> <i>2 Corinthians 12:9</i>

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

*(This section focuses on understanding what the text means —
before jumping to what it means for us.)*

Read Nehemiah 6:1–4

Main Idea: As the work nears completion, Nehemiah needs discernment to recognize an invitation designed to pull him away from what God has given him to do.

Commentary:

By chapter 6, the wall is almost finished. There are no gaps left, although the doors have not yet been installed in the gates. Their enemies Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem have failed to stop the rebuilding through ridicule, threats, and intimidation, so their strategy changes.

By this point, these names should be familiar—but they were more than neighborhood critics. Sanballat was an influential leader associated with Samaria to Judah's north. Tobiah, called “the Ammonite official,” was connected with territory east of the Jordan and also had significant relationships inside Judah—later in Nehemiah we learn that Judean nobles were bound to him through oaths and family connections. Geshem the Arab appears to have been an influential Arabian leader connected with territory south and southeast of Judah. Together, they represent powerful regional interests surrounding the small Persian province of Judah.

That helps explain why rebuilding Jerusalem's walls mattered politically. A fortified Jerusalem was more than a construction project—it marked the restoration of a vulnerable city as a secure regional center. Nehemiah's success changed the balance his opponents had grown accustomed to.

The invitation to meet on the plain of Ono would have taken Nehemiah well away from Jerusalem and required several days of absence. The text tells us plainly that they intended to harm him. Their strategy has shifted: if they cannot stop the wall, perhaps they can remove the leader.

Notice also the repetition: four times they send the same invitation. Opposition does not always appear as an obvious attack; sometimes it appears as a reasonable request repeated until we finally give in. Nehemiah's discernment comes partly from clarity about his assignment: “Why should the work stop?”

The contrast with chapter 5 matters. Nehemiah will stop when faithfulness requires it. What he refuses is an interruption that would take him away from faithfulness. Instead of openly attacking Nehemiah, Sanballat and Geshem invite him to a meeting. On the surface, the request sounds reasonable: “Come, let us meet together.” But Nehemiah recognizes that their intentions are anything but peaceful. Leaving Jerusalem would mean stepping away from the work and putting himself in the hands of people who have repeatedly opposed him.

His response is firm: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down.” Four times the invitation comes. Four times Nehemiah gives the same answer.

Think About It:

1. Why do you think Sanballat and Geshem change strategies as the wall gets closer to completion?
2. How does chapter 5 help us understand that Nehemiah's response is not simply coming from arrogance?
3. What distinction does Nehemiah seem to make between an interruption that requires his attention and one that pulls him away from his responsibility?
4. What does his repeated response reveal about the importance of knowing what God has actually entrusted to you?

Takeaway:

Faithfulness sometimes requires knowing not only what requires our attention—but what does not.

Main Idea: When distraction fails, Nehemiah's enemies use false accusation and fear in an attempt to weaken his resolve.

Commentary:

The fifth attempt raises the pressure. Ancient official correspondence was normally sealed. Sanballat's letter is deliberately open, making its accusations available to be read by the messenger and anyone else who encounters it. The point is not merely to communicate with Nehemiah—it is to let the rumor travel. The accusation itself becomes a weapon.

The charge is politically explosive: rebellion against Persia and an attempt to become king. Nehemiah serves under King Artaxerxes and has been working in Jerusalem under his authorization. Earlier rebuilding efforts had already been stopped by the Persians after accusations that a restored city could become rebellious (*See: Ezra 4*). Sanballat chooses an accusation capable of threatening both Nehemiah personally and the entire project.

Nehemiah refuses to let a false narrative dictate his next move. His brief answer denies the accusation, but he does not allow himself to be dragged into Sanballat's agenda.

Verse 9 reveals the real objective: “Their hands will get too weak for the work.” In the Old Testament, weakened hands can picture lost courage and strength to act—not merely tired muscles (*compare Isaiah 35:3*). The imagery is powerful: the enemies want to weaken Nehemiah's hands, so Nehemiah asks God to strengthen them.

This is one of Nehemiah's characteristic “arrow prayers”: brief prayers woven directly into the pressures of leadership. His resolve is not self-reliance. He answers intimidation with dependence on God.

Think About It:

1. Why might Sanballat intentionally send his accusations in an unsealed letter?
2. Why would accusations of rebellion have been particularly threatening to Nehemiah?
3. What is significant about how briefly Nehemiah responds to the accusations?
4. According to verse 9, what were Nehemiah's enemies actually hoping fear would accomplish?
5. What does Nehemiah's prayer, "Strengthen my hands," reveal about the source of his perseverance?
6. How is dependence on God different from simply trying harder or developing stronger willpower?

Takeaway:

When pressure weakens our hands, faith turns to God for strength.

Read Nehemiah 6:10–14

Main Idea: Nehemiah must discern a more dangerous deception: manipulation disguised as spiritual counsel.

Commentary:

This attack is harder to identify because it comes through someone who appears to speak with spiritual authority. Shemaiah presents his warning as though he knows what is about to happen: assassins are coming, so Nehemiah should hide inside the temple. But *a genuine word from God will not require Nehemiah to violate what God has already revealed.*

Nehemiah was not a priest. The Law restricted access to the sanctuary itself to those authorized for priestly service (see *Numbers 18:7*). Verse 13 confirms that the trap was intended to make Nehemiah sin, giving his enemies something legitimate to use against him. That makes this attack especially deceptive. Sanballat cannot manufacture evidence of Nehemiah's unfaithfulness, so he attempts to frighten Nehemiah into creating the evidence himself.

The passage also gives us an important principle of discernment: spiritual-sounding advice is not automatically godly advice. Nehemiah evaluates the supposed prophecy against God's revealed will. Fear says, "Save yourself at any cost." God's Word places a boundary around what Nehemiah is willing to do—even to preserve his own life.

Verse 14 expands the problem beyond Shemaiah. Noadiah and other prophets were also attempting to intimidate him. The pressure therefore comes not only from political enemies but from voices claiming religious legitimacy. Nehemiah must discern not only what is being said, but whether the message is consistent with the character and commands of the God who supposedly sent it.

Think About It:

1. Why would Shemaiah's warning have been more difficult to recognize as deception than Sanballat's earlier attacks?
2. What made Shemaiah's proposed solution sinful for Nehemiah?
3. What were Nehemiah's enemies hoping to accomplish by frightening him into disobedience?
4. Why can fear sometimes make an unfaithful decision appear reasonable or even necessary?

5. What does this passage teach us about accepting advice simply because someone presents it as spiritual or claims it comes from God?
6. How does Nehemiah's knowledge of God's commands help him discern whether Shemaiah's message is actually from God?

Takeaway:

Fear can make disobedience look reasonable.

Read Nehemiah 6:15–16

Main Idea: The completed wall becomes evidence not merely of human perseverance, but of God's mighty hand.

Commentary:

The wall is completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul after only **fifty-two days** of work. That does not necessarily mean an entirely new defensive system was constructed from the ground up. Nehemiah's project repaired and rebuilt ruined sections of Jerusalem's existing fortifications, with different families and groups working simultaneously along the wall. Even so, the speed of completion is remarkable, especially considering the threats, internal economic crisis, and repeated attempts to stop the project.

The more important detail, however, is the reaction of the surrounding nations. Throughout chapter 6, Nehemiah's opponents try repeatedly to create fear in God's people. In verse 16, the story reverses: they become afraid and lose confidence.

Why? They conclude that *“this work had been done with the help of our God.”* That statement gives the chapter—and really the rebuilding story so far—its theological center. Nehemiah prayed, planned,

organized, confronted injustice, posted guards, resisted distractions, and kept working. Human effort is everywhere in the book. But human effort is never presented as the ultimate explanation.

Nehemiah does not force us to choose between God's help and human faithfulness. The story holds them together. God's people work, but they work in dependence upon Him. They persevere, but they ask Him to strengthen their hands. And when the work is accomplished, the glory ultimately points beyond the workers to God.

The wall becomes more than evidence that determined people can accomplish something difficult. It becomes a testimony to the faithfulness of the God who has been at work throughout the story.

Think About It:

1. Why is the completion of the wall in fifty-two days so remarkable in light of everything the people faced during the rebuilding?
2. What reversal takes place between the enemies' attempts to create fear throughout chapter 6 and their response in verse 16?
3. What conclusion do the surrounding nations reach about the completed wall?
4. Why is that conclusion more significant than simply recognizing Nehemiah's leadership or the people's hard work?
5. Looking back through the story so far, where have we seen God's help alongside human obedience and effort?
6. What does this passage teach us about the ultimate purpose of faithful work done for God?

Takeaway:

Faithful work should ultimately point beyond us to the God who made it possible.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Nehemiah knew what God had put in his hands. And because he knew the work, he could recognize the things trying to pull him away from it.

Some pressures came through distraction: “Come down.”

Some came through reputation: “People are talking.”

Others came through fear of loss: “They're coming to kill you.”

Different tactics. Same goal: Get Nehemiah's hands off the work.

The same pressures can show up in our lives. We can become distracted by every demand around us. We can become consumed with managing what everyone thinks about us. We can become so afraid of losing something important that compromise begins to feel justified. And sometimes we simply become tired.

Nehemiah's prayer gives us another way:

“God, strengthen my hands.”

Faithfulness doesn't mean pretending you're never weak. It means bringing your weakness to God and trusting Him for enough grace to take the next faithful step.

Reflection Questions:

1. What has God clearly put in your hands during this season of your life?
2. What currently competes most for your attention and threatens to pull you away from those responsibilities?

3. Do you struggle with disappointing people or feeling like you need to say yes to every need, request, or opportunity?
 4. How much energy do you spend managing your reputation or trying to make sure everyone understands you correctly?
 5. Is there something you are so afraid of losing that you might be tempted to compromise in order to keep it?
 6. Where are you tired, discouraged, afraid, or simply running low right now?
 7. If you prayed, “God, strengthen my hands,” what specifically would you be asking Him to strengthen you to do?
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LIVING IT OUT

You don't need enough strength today to finish everything God will ever ask you to do. You need His grace for the next faithful step.

Nehemiah teaches us that perseverance is not blind stubbornness. It requires discernment about what deserves our attention, freedom from constantly defending ourselves, courage to obey when fear tells us to compromise, and dependence on God when our own strength begins running out.

Action Steps:

1. KNOW YOUR WORK.

Ask God: What have You actually entrusted to me in this season? Name the relationships, responsibilities, ministry, work, or obedience He has put in your hands.

2. WATCH WHAT PULLS YOU AWAY.

Before automatically saying yes, ask whether something is moving you toward faithfulness or distracting you from what God has already given you.

3. LIVE WITH INTEGRITY—AND LET IT GO.

You don't have to answer every accusation, correct every misunderstanding, or win every argument. Be faithful. Tell the truth. Entrust your reputation to God.

4. DON'T LET FEAR MAKE THE DECISION.

When you're afraid of losing something, ask: "What does faithfulness to God require?" Don't allow self-preservation to become more important than obedience.

5. PRAY FOR STRENGTH.

Be honest with God about where you're tired, discouraged, tempted, or afraid. Pray: "God, strengthen my hands." Then—with whatever strength He provides—take the next faithful step.

For LifeGroups:

ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

Share —

- What part of Nehemiah 6 stood out to you most?
- What has God put "in your hands" during this season?
- What kinds of distractions most easily pull you away from those things?
- Where do you feel pressure to manage other people's opinions of you?
- What are you most afraid to lose?
- Where do you currently need God to strengthen your hands?
- What is one faithful step you can take this week?

Pray Together —

Pray that God would help you:

- Clearly recognize what He has entrusted to you.
- Grow in discernment about what deserves your attention.
- Say no when saying yes would pull you away from obedience.
- Live with integrity without becoming consumed with reputation.
- Recognize when fear is making compromise seem reasonable.
- Trust God with the things you are afraid to lose.
- Depend on His strength rather than pretending to be self-sufficient.
- Have enough grace and courage for the next faithful step.
- Persevere in such a way that your lives point beyond yourselves to God.

“Now strengthen my hands.” — Nehemiah 6:9