

Nehemiah – Leadership Principles

Lesson 4 – Opposition

Leader Notes

Read or have someone read the paragraphs below.

Nehemiah needed to deal with constant opposition from Judean neighbors. Nehemiah's leadership skills often are highlighted by his success in shepherding God's people in the face of the constant and sometimes violent opposition that came from the nations bordering Judah. The leaders of this opposition were:

- 1) Sanballat was the governor of Samaria. When Assyria conquered Israel (northern tribes) they took many Israelites into captivity and replaced them with people from elsewhere. The Jews at Jesus time thought of the Samaritans as half-breeds and looked down on them. The hatred between Jews and Samaritans was significant.
- 2) Tobias apparently was the Persian official over the territory of Ammon, since he is called "the Ammonite servant (of Artaxerxes)." Like Sanballat, he at times acted independently to oppose Nehemiah or to insinuate himself into powerful circles in Judah (6:17-19; 13:4-8) Tobias also had a close relationship with Eliashib the priest (13:4-7).
- 3) The Arab ruler Geshem may have been in charge of a northern Arabian confederacy that controlled vast areas from northeast Egypt to northern Arabia and southern Palestine. Geshem may have been opposed to Nehemiah's development of an independent kingdom because he feared that it might interfere with his lucrative spice trade.

From the time that Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem to the completion of its wall, these enemies devised plots designed to stop Nehemiah and the Judeans. The following verse teach us about opposition to our leadership.

1. 2:10
 - a. How was this situation a problem for them?

This would keep them from controlling Judah physically, spiritually and economically. Very simply they would lose the control they had.

- b. What similar situations have you experienced?

This is personal work and don't force anyone to share.

2. 2:19-20

- a. How do his previous actions help to minimize this problem?

He boldly confronts those who are attempting to thwart what he is doing and, at the same time, avoids being drawn into a debate. He refuses to argue. He states the reason for his confidence; “the God of heaven will give us success.”

- b. How does the fact that he knows the Scripture well help him in this situation?

He knows what he wants and can act on God’s will for the situation.

3. 4:1-14

- a. Verses 1-3 – The opposition intensified their resistance. What strategies did they employ?

They belittle the project and hope to have the Judeans lose heart and give up.

- b. Verses 4-6 – What was Nehemiah’s response to this situation?

Prayed and built.

- c. Verses 7-8 – What are the next steps by the enemy?

Threatened to fight and stir up trouble.

- d. Verse 9 – What counter move did Nehemiah make?

Prayed, got a guard and built.

- e. Verses 10-12 – What or who became the enemy now?

The people feared the enemy, they began to weaken physically and the enemy threaten further physical harm.

- f. Verses 13-14 – What as Nehemiah’s response?

Nehemiah acted to post guards for protection by placing families in position near their property. He urged them not to be afraid of the enemy and reminded his people how great their God is.

g. What are some major learnings you can take from this section?

Thank the respondents for their answers.

4. 6:17-19

Despite the completion of the wall and the discouragement of the surrounding peoples, Tobiah remained subversively active in Judean affairs, posing a continual threat to Nehemiah's leadership. These verses and this topic will be studied in a later lesson.