

HomeTown: Work Through Discouragement and Get the Job Done
Shay Robbins, WHFC Teaching Team
May 6, 2018

These notes are a combination of Shay's message, excerpts from other message outlines from online texts, and the sermon note preparer's own input.

Ozarkian Title Translation: Grit to it and Get-R- Done

Grit: unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger

Opening context Scripture Passage:

1 Peter 4:12 - "Don't be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you..."

1 Peter 4:16 - "Let him glorify God..."

1 Peter 4:19 - "...entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

Question #1 - When you enlisted to follow Christ, what expectations for a risk adverse and suffering less existence did you have?

Question #2 - When did you first realize the Christian life is often times experiencing the joy, peace, and contentment of Christ through suffering and adversity?

There is no such thing as an Adventure without Adversity!

Example: Tim Tebow video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLc25o8V5aE>

Question #3 - Share a time when you had eyes for an opportunity for spiritual growth and development instead of seeing it as pointless suffering? It might be a time when you pointed out the need for leaning into the struggle of suffering and learning from failure with one of your children. It might be encouraging a co-worker or Home Group or church member that suffering is meaningful, either a test sent to inspect us or a trial sent to build up our character in Christ.

READ Matthew 7:15 - Beware of Wolves in Sheep's Clothing, then move onto today's BIG IDEA.

BIG IDEA for TODAY: *Leading* through adversity depends on your ability to discern the enemies attacks and remain focused on the job at hand.

We are all LEADERS in some domain of our lives, whether leading yourself, your family as a father or single parent, a student organization, club, or team at school, a business, a Home Group, a church ministry, a peer group, a city, a state, a country, etc.

Discernment is the ability to see things through God's perspective.

We Grow in Discernment in 3 Ways:

Growth Principle #1 - Knowledge of God's Word while Walking by the Spirit

God reveals to us in His Word that we have an enemy in this world, but Christ our resurrected Lord, has saving and staying power greater than our defeated enemy. We must learn to live by His life. Read texts.

1 Peter 5:8 - "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

1 John 4:4 - Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. **2** This is

how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, **3** but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. **4** You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. **5** They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. **6** We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit[a] of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

On to today's text in Nehemiah 6. **Read** Nehemiah 6:1-4.

To complete the work God has given us to do, just like Nehemiah, we must discern and resist Satan's many schemes.

1. Satan's first scheme: Intrigue and Guilt Trips. Nehemiah's response: Firm in his priorities (6:1-4).

The local *Samaritan Daily Sun* might have reported the incident like this:

Nehemiah Says No to Ono

Samaritan officials have disclosed that Nehemiah, governor of Judah, has again turned down the offer of Governor Sanballat of Samaria to meet at one of the villages in Ono, on the Judah-Samaria border. The proposed conference would include the Big Four of the area: Geshem, leader of the Arabs; Tobiah, leader of the Ammonites; Sanballat, and Nehemiah.

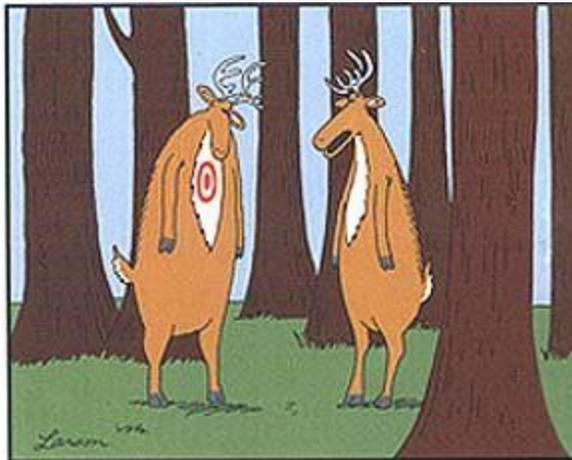
Sanballat issued a statement today in which he sharply criticized Nehemiah for his repeated refusals to cooperate. He reports that the purpose of such a meeting would be to work on a formula for lasting peace in the region. The Samaritan leader said with

evident frustration, “This is the fourth time Nehemiah has turned down my invitation to meet and discuss our mutual concerns. These repeated refusals mean that the responsibility for increasing tensions and any violence that may result, rests solely upon Jerusalem.” (Adapted from Donald Campbell, *Nehemiah: Man in Charge* [Victor Books], p. 55.)

Sounds like today’s news, doesn’t it? Note Satan’s first scheme:

SATAN ESPECIALLY TARGETS BELIEVERS and LEADERS WITH HIS SCHEMES OF INTRIGUE (Intrigue - to arouse the curiosity or interest of; fascinate) and **CASTING GUILT**.

You’ve probably seen this Gary Larsen “Far Side” cartoon:



“Bummer of a birthmark, Hal.”

Every Christian has that target on his chest. If Satan can bring down the leader of a family, a dad or single parent, a Home Group leader, a church leader, a business leader, a student organization leader, he will cause extensive damage to a family, a church, a community, a school, a peer group, a business or organization. But whether you’re a leader or not, the enemy uses the same schemes to try to sabotage your walk with God. Note two things:

- **SATAN USES SUBTLE DECEPTION AND PLAUSIBLE SOUNDING APPEALS, BUT HIS INTENT IS TO DESTROY US.**

“Come, let’s meet together. We should try to iron out our differences. You’re in favor of peace, aren’t you? Don’t you want good relationships with your neighbors? We just want to foster mutual understanding.” It all sounded so good, but Nehemiah rightly perceived that their intent was to ambush him if he went and didn’t yield to a human guilt trip.

Satan still uses all sorts of innocent-sounding appeals to lure believers into a trap. He isn't playing games: he wants to devour you (1 Pet. 5:8). How many times have you seen our Enemy repeatedly use the trap of luring a Christian young person into marriage with an unbeliever. Of course the unbeliever is *always* a nice guy! A drunken, abusive bum wouldn't lure you into the trap! But a nice, good-looking, successful unbeliever who promises to go to church with you, will do the trick just fine.

Growth Principle #2 - Growth in Maturity

Hebrews 5:12-14 - **12** In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! **13** Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. **14** But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Growing in Christ-like maturity is so important because **SATAN IS RELENTLESSLY PERSISTENT IN HIS SCHEMES.**

Notice in Nehemiah 6:1-4, they sent messengers to Nehemiah four times with the same invitation. Four times he sent back the same answer, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" (6:3). In other words, "What part of *no* don't you understand?"

Just because you resist the devil once, don't think that he is going to give up and leave you alone! He will hit you again and again with the same temptation, to wear you down. Look at how Delilah wore Samson out with the same request, to tell her the secret of his strength. Finally, he yielded and the enemy triumphed. His life was a disgrace to the Lord's name.

Question #4: How did Nehemiah resist this scheme of intrigue?

Answer: NEHEMIAH RESISTED SATAN'S INTRIGUES BY ALIGNING HIMSELF, HIS HEART WITH THE LORD THROUGH PRAYER, FASTING, AND FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER LIKE-MINDED GOD-FOLLOWERS, AND THEREFORE COULD STAND FIRM IN HIS PRIORITIES.

“I am doing a great work and I cannot come down.” He wasn’t being arrogant. It was just that he knew that what God had given him to do was important for the Lord’s sake and for His people’s sake. And it was not quite finished. Walls without gates were as effective as no walls at all. His priority was to finish the wall. He didn’t allow an unnecessary meeting with the enemy to distract him from that one aim.

As believers, our chief priority is to glorify God by knowing Jesus Christ and by being conformed to His character beginning at the heart level. Anything that pulls you away from that priority, even if it is a ministry, is a ploy of the devil. Beyond that, we have other priorities in accordance with our gifts. To get distracted with other things, even good things, would be to yield to the enemy’s schemes.

Question #5 - The essence of discipleship, one of the five purposes of the church, is living by the indwelling life of Jesus Christ with other believers. Can you describe your experience of living by a life not your own, but the life of Christ within you? (Reread underlined verses below, but especially John 6:57).

John 6:47-57 **47** Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. **48** I am the bread of life. **49** Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. **50** But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” **53** Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. **55** For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. **56** Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. **57** Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

Growth Principle #3 - Discernment is a Gift we can ask for

Read 1 Cor 12:10, John 16

Satan’s scheme: Innuendo. Beware of Vague Accusations and Audacious Threats

Nehemiah’s response: Forthright rebuttal coupled with prayer (6:5-9).

After four frustrated attempts to lure Nehemiah into an ambush, the enemy shifted tactics. He sent an open letter to Nehemiah that contained a rumor accusing him of plotting to rebel and become the king. The word was that he had hired prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem that he was the new king. The letter also contained a not-so-veiled threat that if he didn’t want these nasty rumors to get back to King Artaxerxes, he needed to agree to a meeting (6:5-7). This shows us that ...

SATAN SPREADS SLANDEROUS FALSE RUMORS AGAINST BELIEVERS AND GODLY LEADERS.

Normally letters between officials were sealed and private. Sanballat knew that the servant who delivered this letter would read it, and so would countless other people along the way. The nice thing about a rumor is, you only have to launch it with one gossip, and it will spread like a virus from person to person, growing more malicious as it travels. Invariably, such rumors attack the character and the motives of a fellow believer and godly leader. “Did you know what Nehemiah

was planning?” “No, but I had wondered why he was working so hard on that wall. It sure makes sense!”

NEHEMIAH RESISTED SATAN'S INNUENDOES WITH THE TRUTH AND WITH PRAYER.

In his *Lectures to My Students*, Spurgeon has a chapter titled “The Blind Eye and the Deaf Ear” ([Zondervan, pp. 321-335). He is right in saying that in most cases, believers and leaders should rumors die a natural death. He said (p. 332), Falsehoods usually carry their own refutation somewhere about them, and sting themselves to death. Some lies especially have a peculiar smell, which betrays their rottenness to every honest nose.... Your blameless life will be your best defence, and those who have seen it will not allow you to be condemned so readily as your slanderers expect.

But he adds (p. 333), Yet there are exceptions to this general rule. When distinct, definite, public charges are made against a man he is bound to answer them, and answer them in the clearest and most open manner. To decline all investigation is in such a case practically to plead guilty, and ... the general public ordinarily regard a refusal to reply as a proof of guilt.

Since this open letter was serious a public accusation against Nehemiah, he did not remain silent. First, he sent a message back to Sanballat stating the truth and firmly denying the charges: “Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind” (6:8). Then, he shot up another of his sentence prayers, “But now, O God, strengthen my hands.”

Believers and leaders must pray for God’s wisdom as to whether to remain silent or to reply to false accusations. But however you respond, prayer and keeping on with the work that God has given us to do are always right. The enemy checked Nehemiah with his schemes of intrigue and innuendo. However, Nehemiah resisted by standing firm in his priorities and with forthright truth and prayer. But Satan didn’t give up.

Question #6 - How can we discern when to respond to false rumors about us versus letting them die out on their own?

3. Satan's scheme: Intimidation. Nehemiah's response: Let Satan's Attacks Further Your Resolve!! And Beware of False Prophets/Teachers. **Fearlessly obey God (6:10-14)** Live life in a way that causes people to take notice!

SATAN USES RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TO SCARE US INTO WRONG BEHAVIOR THAT WOULD RUIN OUR REPUTATION.

Here the enemy combines deception with intimidation and fear. A prophet named Shemaiah was confined at home. We do not know if he was ill or if he was doing this as a prophetic drama, as the prophets commonly did. He was not outwardly with the enemy, although Nehemiah would later discern that Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him (6:12). Apparently they had also hired or at least influenced a prophetess named Noadiah and other Jewish prophets to try to frighten Nehemiah (6:14). But Shemaiah called for Nehemiah and then suggested that the two of them meet within the temple and close the doors, adding "for they are coming to kill you, and they are coming to kill you at night" (6:10).

Here was a man claiming to have a word from God that could save Nehemiah's life! "Hide in the temple while you can, because the enemy is going to kill you some night while you are asleep!" If Nehemiah had followed this counsel, he would not have been a good leader, and even more, he would have sinned. If he had gone into hiding, his example of fear would have spread fear among the workers on the wall. And, not being a priest, Nehemiah would have disobeyed God's law by going into the temple ([Num. 18:7](#)). Non-priests could flee for protection to the horns of the altar in the temple courtyard ([1 Kings 1:50](#); [2:28](#); [Exod. 21:14](#)), but they could not enter the temple itself. If Nehemiah had acted in fear and fled to the temple, his enemies would spread the evil report to ruin his reputation ([Neh. 6:13](#)).

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT: Be careful when someone claiming to be a Christian invites you to do something that you know is wrong. He may use scare tactics to get you to go along with whatever it is: "Everyone does this. If you don't join in, nobody will like you." It is the enemy, trying to

scare you into sinful behavior to ruin your testimony. Don't yield!
Nehemiah respond?

How did

NEHEMIAH RESISTED SATAN'S INTIMIDATION WITH FEARLESS OBEDIENCE AND PRAYER.

“Should a man like me flee? And could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in” (6:11). Nehemiah didn't perceive until this point that God had not sent Shemaiah, but that Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him (6:12). One thing that gave Nehemiah this insight was that he knew God's Word and that a true prophet would never counsel someone to do something against God's Word. It is always right to obey God's Word no matter what the threatened consequences may be. It is always wrong to disobey God's Word, even if it looks like your disobedience will gain you something good. It is better to lose your life, if it so happens, in the path of obedience to God than to save your life through disobedience.

So Nehemiah refused Shemaiah's counsel and he then reverted to his common practice of lifting up his situation to God in prayer, asking God to take care of his enemies (6:14). When Satan sends people to intimidate you to disobedience, respond with fearless obedience and prayer.

The result of Nehemiah's staying the course is almost anticlimactic: “So the wall was completed ... in fifty-two days” (6:15). So the final section leads off with Nehemiah's victory, followed by the enemy's rejoinder:

Question #7 How can we know which advice someone is giving is correct or misguided, even sinful? **ANSWER:** All advice must align with God's revealed Word.

4. Nehemiah's victory: The finished wall. Satan's scheme: Infiltration (6:15-19).

NEHEMIAH'S PERSISTENT RESISTANCE GAINED THE VICTORY FOR THE LORD.

When the enemies and surrounding nations saw that the wall was completed, they lost their confidence. They had to admit that this work had been accomplished because of God (6:15). All of the enemies that Sanballat had drawn into his plots against the Jews only widened the circle

of God's glory when the wall was finished. Even though Nehemiah and the workers on the wall had worked hard, not even their enemies attributed their success to their hard work. Rather, they knew that it was from God.

That should be a model for us. We should work as hard as if the success depended on us, but all the while we should lean totally upon the Lord, remembering that unless He builds the house and guards the city, we labor in vain ([Ps. 127:1](#)). We want even God's enemies to glorify Him ([1 Pet. 2:12](#)). REMEMBER what Travis Brawner shared a few weeks ago, quoting St. Augustine, "Pray like it all depends on God, and work like it all depends on you."

Then we read, "So Satan gave up the battle and went home, and Nehemiah and the Jews lived happily ever after." Not exactly!

SATAN LOST THE BATTLE, BUT HE DIDN'T GIVE UP. HE INFILTRATED THE RANKS.

Tobiah, the governor of the Ammonites, was probably a nominal half-Jew (his name is Jewish, meaning "Yah is good"). Furthermore, he was related by marriage to at least two influential Jews ("nobles," 6:17), and he had business contracts ("bound by oath," 6:18) with these men. They were not only in frequent contact by mail, but they often told Nehemiah about Tobiah's "good deeds," and they reported to Tobiah things that Nehemiah said in their presence. But Tobiah showed his true colors by writing threatening letters to Nehemiah.

Satan often uses such espionage. He infiltrates the ranks of the church with secret agents that profess to be believers. But their hearts are in the world, and they oppose godly men like Nehemiah who expose their spiritual indifference and sin.

I hope that each of you ponders often the apostle John's warning: "Do not love the world, nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" ([1 John 2:15](#)).

Question #8 Since Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and his servants as servants of righteousness ([2 Cor. 11:14-15](#)), how can we be on guard against his servants in the church?

