



IN THE FACE OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Nehemiah 4:1-17

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*Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture quotations are from the
New American Standard Version of the Bible.*



Our Mission: To Reach the World

From His Heart Ministries is the broadcast ministry of Pastor Jeff Schreve. We began in 2005 with the mission to share hope from the loving heart of God. We believe that no matter how badly you may have messed up in life, God still loves you and still has a wonderful plan for your life. Our goal is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus with biblical preaching, practical teaching, and encouragement for everyday living. Our prayer is that we will help people come to know Christ in a personal way and grow in a deeper relationship with Him. *From His Heart* is a viewer and listener supported ministry. We greatly appreciate your prayers and financial support.

FROM THE AUTHOR:

If there is one thing I know a lot about, it is discouragement. Pastors are prone to get discouraged. Elijah was a GREAT man of God. He was God's man on Mount Carmel and defeated the 450 prophets of Baal. Yet within just a few short hours of this tremendous, mountain top experience, Elijah was so overcome with discouragement that he prayed for God to take his life. Wow! What does that teach us? No one is immune to discouragement.

The good news is this, however: no matter what discouraging problems you may be facing today, Jesus Christ is greater. He is the God of all flesh and "nothing is too difficult for [Him]" (Jeremiah 32:27). In this booklet, I will share four key insights from the book of Nehemiah that will help you understand the source of your discouragement and the victory that is yours in the Lord Jesus.

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read. Let the truth of God's Word touch your heart and fill you with hope and confidence. Remember, discouraging circumstances are nothing more than an opportunity for God to work a great miracle of deliverance and blessing. He is ready, willing, and able to do amazing things as you stare IN THE FACE OF DISCOURAGEMENT.

Love,



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In the Face of Discouragement

During the blazing Texas summer of 1997, I packed a moving truck, loaded my wife and three girls in the car, and started the 1,200-mile trek to seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. I felt a little like Abraham must have felt when he left Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the Promised Land. I knew that God had called me to preach, and I was excited to experience what God had in store for my family and me.

But this step of faith wasn't easy and required many changes to our lifestyle. In Houston we enjoyed a nice, 2,700 square-foot home, but in North Carolina all we could afford (since I was a full-time student) was a 1,400 square-foot rent house. That is not a lot of space for a guy and four females!

I began classes, and we found a good church for our family to join. Since we were coming from a mega church in Houston where I was a deacon and taught a large adult Sunday school class, I was hopeful that my new pastor would allow me the opportunity to

teach. In the next few weeks, however, NO ONE, not a single person, asked me to teach or preach. But my wife Debbie, with her beautiful voice, was getting all kinds of opportunities to share and sing. I began to think, *“Hey, time out here! We moved because of me, not her!”*

The Marriage Class

Finally, the pastor agreed to let me teach a marriage class on Sunday nights before the evening worship service. Excited for this opportunity, I printed up flyers and went door to door in the neighborhood inviting people to this new class. I was believing God for a big group of eager participants.

On the first Sunday of the class, we had six in attendance (including Debbie and me). At least it was a good start. But the following week, attendance dropped significantly. No one came ... not even Debbie! It was just me in an empty classroom.

I remember sitting alone in that room with my lesson all prepared thinking, *“What’s*

the deal, God? Why did you bring me here? My life was a lot more effective for the Kingdom of God when I was in Houston selling water treatment chemicals and teaching a Sunday School class of 50 people.” I was so discouraged and didn’t understand why God had led me to such a difficult place.

Discouragement Defined

Have you ever been way down in the dumps and just totally discouraged? Webster’s Dictionary defines discouragement as “the state of being deprived of confidence, hope or spirit.” That described me ... I was deprived of confidence, hope and spirit.

Now someone has well said that discouragement is the chief tool of the devil. It’s his lethal weapon. The enemy of our souls knows that if he can discourage us, then we are one step closer to being depressed and derailed in our walk with God. A depressed, derailed Christian is a sitting duck for the devil.

Are you discouraged?

I believe there are many reading this booklet today who are struggling with discouragement. Perhaps you are discouraged in your marriage ... or your lack of a marriage. Perhaps your job situation has you down. Perhaps you have been battling an illness for so long that you and your doctors just don't know what to do. Perhaps you simply feel "deprived of confidence, hope and spirit."

Some of you are discouraged in your walk with God because you desire to obey and please God, but there is a situation in your life that is continually knocking you down. You are dealing with a difficult person that just seems to bring out the worst in you. Each day you think, "*Today, I'm going to do better. I'm not going to lose my temper.*" But before you know it, you've already lost your cool and said some things that were less than edifying. You just can't seem to rise above the situation and get victory.

What do you do in the face of discouragement? What does God have to say in His Word about discouragement? He has plenty to say on this topic in Nehemiah chapter 4.

Background of Nehemiah

Nehemiah was chosen by God to leave Susa, the capital city in Persia where he lived, and make a 750-mile trip back to Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the once thriving, luxuriant city, was now a pitiful wasteland. 141 years ago, Babylon had come into the city and destroyed it. The temple was burned and the walls of the city were broken down. Without walls, the city was vulnerable and defenseless. But it was still God's city, and He had a plan for Jerusalem's restoration.

So God put into the heart of Nehemiah the mission of motivating the people to arise and build. It is important to note that any time you and I say we're going to arise and build, the devil replies, *"Well, then I'm going to arise and BLAST! I am going to oppose you*

at every turn.” And that satanically inspired opposition is exactly what we see in the book of Nehemiah.

“Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. And he spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, ‘What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?’ Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, ‘Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!’” (Nehemiah 4:1-3).

And Nehemiah replies: *“Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before thee, for they have demoralized the builders” (Nehemiah 4:4-5).*

The people rallied behind Nehemiah and began to get excited about the building project. Ezra had attempted this task 13 years earlier, but the project was shut down. No doubt, Nehemiah's workers were secretly thinking, "*Hey, we remember when we tried to do this rebuilding thing with Ezra. It didn't work. I think it might be impossible.*" (Note: the wall they were building was about two miles in circumference and about twenty feet tall. It was a massive construction job.) But Nehemiah encouraged them that God had put this in his heart and had given him favor with King Artaxerxes to get everything they needed to fund this building project. Nehemiah's battle cry was, "*We need to arise and build! The God of heaven will give us success.*"

The people were excited, but then the struggles and trials came in like a flood. At the halfway point of the project, they began to get seriously discouraged ... but they overcame the discouragement. What was their secret? Let's look at four key insights that will help the most discouraged person rise above.

**INSIGHT #1: DISCOURAGEMENT
COMES WHEN YOU LISTEN TO
THE LIES AND RIDICULE OF
DISCOURAGERS.**

Nehemiah and the people faced two vocal enemies whose end game was to demoralize the builders and derail the building project. One man was named Sanballat, meaning “the moon god has given life.” He was the governor of Samaria and a total pagan. He wasn’t a worshipper of Yahweh God, nor did he pretend to be. His claim to fame was his prowess in discouraging God’s people.

Sanballat’s partner in crime was Tobiah the Ammonite. Despite his ancestry, most people believe that Tobiah probably claimed to worship Yahweh (the true God of the Jews). But as the old saying goes, actions always speak louder than words. We clearly see in Nehemiah chapter 4 that Tobiah didn’t really worship God. He teamed up with the

enemies of God to try to stop the God-directed work of rebuilding the walls.

The devil used these two men to pour cold water on God's plan and on God's people. They were furious and angry that the walls were being rebuilt and that Nehemiah was in the city rallying the people to work.

You might be thinking, "*Why do they care so much that the walls are being rebuilt?*" Well, because when the walls are down, Jerusalem is weak. And when Jerusalem is weak, they have maximum power and influence. A weak Jerusalem helped them economically and politically. They profited greatly from its weakened state.

The Ways of the Devil

Sanballat and Tobiah begin their assault on the people of God by peppering the air with lies. A Pastor Jeff paraphrase of Nehemiah 4:2-3 may help you catch the sentiment of their comments: "*These workers are just pitiful Jews. Their motives are impure. This project is all about self, not*

about God. What a joke! Do they actually think their prayers will build the wall? And look at the wall they have constructed so far. It cannot even support the weight of a little fox! This is hilarious!” Thus, the enemies of God heaped lies and mockery upon the heads of the people of God.

Thomas Carlyle said, “*Ridicule is the language of the devil.*” The devil loves to ridicule, mock, and make fun of people who are walking with God and following Him in obedience.

Do you know why ridicule is the language of the devil? He knows that ridicule is effective. I’ve heard it said that “*some can stand bravely when shot at, but cower meekly when laughed at.*” There are men and women who can stand up to bullets, but they cower in the face of mockery. And the devil says, “*I’m going to do just that! I’m going to make fun of them, mock them, and ridicule their work for God.*” Ridicule is rooted in lies. Lies and ridicule cut like a knife at the emotional fabric of one’s being.

You Fight with the Truth

Jesus said, *“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). Psalm 15:2 tells us that the righteous man *“speaks truth in his heart.”* The way to overcome the lying ridicule of the devil is to remember the truth and speak the truth.

What was the truth for Nehemiah and the people of God? They were NOT “feeble Jews”; they were God’s mighty workers on mission with God! Their motives were NOT impure; they were working to the glory of God! Their wall was NOT a weak, pitiful joke; it was a miracle in the making. And their prayers WERE making a difference!

When you hear the lying taunts and jeers of the enemy, speak the truth of God in your heart. Oftentimes, the devil will whisper these lies: *“God doesn’t love you. God won’t forgive you. God won’t answer your prayers. This situation in your life will never get better. Your efforts are so pitiful that they are laughable. You should just quit now!”* Those are all lies from hell. God DOES love you

(Galatians 2:20). God is forgiving (Psalm 86:5). God IS working, even when you cannot see it (Philippians 2:13). Your work in Jesus' name DOES make a difference (1 Corinthians 15:55). Conquer the lies with God's truth!

Our Adversary

It's interesting to notice, too, that folks like Sanballat and Tobiah, who discourage with lies and ridicule, are always there when a work for God is being attempted. I think that is something we tend to overlook. We forget that when we decide to "arise and build" for God, the devil comes behind us and whispers, *"Yeah, and I'm going to arise and blast!"* If you have the desire to work for God, the devil has the desire to wreck the work.

You and I have an adversary, the devil. He doesn't want to see our lives changed for God's glory or old sin patterns abolished. He doesn't want to see families mended and marriages restored. He doesn't want to see the Gospel preached and people come to know Christ as Savior and Lord. He will do

everything he can to arise and blast the building, and he will send discouragers to help him accomplish his goal.

Jesus' Warning

Christ gives us an important warning in Mark 4:24: *"And He was saying to them, 'Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.'*" You see, a person is known by his friends AND by his enemies. The last thing you want to be is an enemy in someone's life by being a Sanballat or Tobiah, discouragers deluxe.

Are you a criticizer and a ridiculer? Are you constantly picking out things in other people or in your church that are wrong? *"Well, they didn't do the music right this Sunday and the preacher talked WAY too long."* If you are a criticizer of those who are trying to further the Kingdom of God, my question is this: What are YOU doing to serve the King?

One day, a man criticized Evangelist D. L. Moody for the methods he used to witness for Christ. Moody responded by saying, *“Well, sir, tell me how you witness.”* To which the man replied, *“I don’t witness at all.”* Moody looked at him and said, *“I like the way I’m doing it better than the way you’re not doing it!”*

Criticizers aren’t doing anything but criticizing. They aren’t helping God build anything; they’re just tearing down. If you are a Tobiah or a Sanballat, you get your heart right before God! You need to confess your sins and ask God to change you! You need to quit trying to stop the building project and roll up your sleeves to help with the building project.

A Companion of Fools?

Sometimes, we foolishly allow negative, faithless, critical “friends” into our lives who fill our minds with doubts and discouragement. The writer of Proverbs warns, *“He who walks with wise men will be*

wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Proverbs 13:20). Are you walking with fools and listening to fools?

I remember right after I gave my life to Jesus, I made an important decision to get new friends. I wasn't mean to my old friends; I just knew that I couldn't hang around those guys for long periods of time or they'd drag me down. I would be back to my old ways before I knew it. I needed to find wise men to surround myself with ... people who would build me up, not tear me down.

You and I both need to walk with people who push us closer to Christ. The Scripture commands us, ***“Let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25, NIV).*** Do you have encouraging people in your life? Do you have people who will speak truth to you and push you on in your walk with Christ? If not, I challenge you to pray for and seek godly friends to walk alongside you.

Instead, if you surround yourself with discouragers, don't expect to grow or to excel in God's work. You see, discouragers don't

want others to succeed. They don't truly desire for God to be glorified. If you hang out with discouragers, you will become a discouraged companion of fools.

INSIGHT #2: DISCOURAGEMENT COMES WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR STRENGTH.

Looking back at our story in Nehemiah, we see in verse 6 of chapter 4 that the builders had reached the halfway mark: *“So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”*

Have you ever been at the halfway point in something and you just lose your strength in completing the project? I remember as a kid facing the insurmountable task of cleaning out the garage. Growing up, our garage was our junk yard. The cars couldn't even fit due to the old washing machine, bicycle parts and boxes of clutter.

Some Saturday mornings, mom and dad would say the dreaded words, “*Kids, we’re cleaning out the garage today.*” YIKES! Somebody, save me! I’d rather move than tackle that chore. We all knew it was going to be a nightmare.

After hours of hard labor, the garage didn’t look very different. We’d look around and get so discouraged by what we still had left to do. That’s what happened to Nehemiah’s builders. “*Thus in Judah it was said, ‘The strength of the burden bearers is failing, yet there is much rubbish; and we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall’*” (Nehemiah 4:10).

They lost their stamina and strength. The Message Bible says this: “*...the builders are pooped!*” (Nehemiah 4:10). Discouragement begins to set in when you’re exhausted and have lost your strength.

Tribe of Judah

Notice the phrase *“Thus in Judah...”* from Nehemiah 4:10. Of the 12 tribes of Israel, Judah was the cream of the crop. Jesus was born into Judah, and He is called *“the Lion from the tribe of Judah”* (Revelation 5:5).

The word Judah means “praise.” But in Nehemiah 4:10, the cream of the crop tribe has lost its strength and praise. Judah is worn out.

Physical Rest

Do you know what that teaches me? The best of us must get physical rest. I don’t care if your descendants came from Judah or if you are the world’s strongest man ... you get tired like everyone else. The very best among us needs rest.

Seeing his people’s fatigue, Nehemiah called a time-out. In verse 13, he says: *“then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space*

behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows” (Nehemiah 4:13). He gave them a break from the wall, because he knew they were tired and needed to rest. It was time to regroup.

Is your bow bent?

There is a Greek proverb that says, “you will break the bow if you keep it always bent.” For some of you, in your situation in life – your job, your responsibilities, your schedule – your bow is always bent. You’re always “on,” and you never rest. Even when you go to bed at night, the wheels don’t stop spinning as you are thinking up new business deals, devising new plays for your team, or entertaining new ideas in your head. Listen: you will break if your bow is always bent.

There has to be a regular time you set aside to rest. That’s why the Lord included rest in the Ten Commandments – the Sabbath is a specific day of the week set aside for rest. In America, we tend to take the “go, go, go,

faster, faster, faster” approach and break this important “rest” commandment.

Spiritual Rest

Listen, the best of us must get *physical* rest, and the best of us must get *spiritual* rest. Scripture says in Isaiah 30: ***“For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, ‘In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength. But you were not willing’(Isaiah 30:15).*** God wants us to rest spiritual by trusting Him and waiting expectantly for Him.

Another example is found Matthew 11, when Jesus says, ***“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29).*** God knows that we need to experience His restoring, refreshing presence. He gives strength to the weary when we take the time to come to Him.

Too Busy for God

God forbid that you and I get so busy in the work of the Lord that we don't have time for the Lord of the work. To my shame, I must confess that at times I get so busy doing ministry that I fail to spend the necessary time with the King of kings and Lord of lords ... who is over every ministry.

God says, "*Rest in Me!*" The best of us must get physical rest and spiritual rest. And when you don't get it, you get discouraged.

INSIGHT #3: DISCOURAGEMENT COMES WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR FOCUS.

When we get our eyes off the prize, trouble will quickly follow. Look again what Scripture says in Nehemiah 4: "*Thus in Judah it was said, 'The strength of the burden bearers is failing, yet there is much rubbish; and we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall'*" (Nehemiah 4:10). The

people began to look around and get discouraged ... *“Why did we ever start this job? All we see is rubbish, broken stones and burned-out gates. The job keeps growing, and there’s no way we can do this.”*

Things go from bad to worse in verse 11: ***“Our enemies said, ‘They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work’” (Nehemiah 4:11).*** As Mark Driscoll explained when he preached on this passage, *“Nehemiah, I was all excited when you gave me the T-shirt and a shovel and said, ‘Let’s rebuild the wall!’ But now, I need a sword and a shield, and I’m not so excited about this project anymore.”*

The people’s minds were clouded with all the negatives, and to make matters worse, they were told they could be attacked at any moment. When Nehemiah saw their mounting fear, he said, ***“Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses” (Nehemiah 4:14).***

Nehemiah saw that they were getting afraid because they had lost their focus. They had gotten their eyes off the Lord.

Peter

If you are discouraged, do you want to know why? In a nutshell, it's because you have taken your eyes off the Lord, and you are too focused on the difficult circumstances surrounding you. Instead of trusting God, you're listening to the discouragers around you who whisper lies and don't want to see God do great things in your life. Get your eyes back on Jesus ... that's what Peter did.

We read Peter's interesting story in Matthew chapter 14. Christ had called Peter to get out of the boat and walk on the water with Him. At first, it was wonderful. He was actually walking on the water with Jesus. But the wind and the waves caused Peter to lose focus. He shifted his eyes from the Savior to the circumstances ... and he started to sink.

When he returned His focus to Christ and cried out for help, the Lord rescued him.

“Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’” (Matthew 14:31).

You and I will sink if we get our focus off the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, He will rescue us if we lose our step ... but with our eyes on Him the wind and waves can't bring us down.

Fix Your Eyes

What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus? What are passages like Hebrews 12 referring to when they tell us to ***“...run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...”*** (Hebrews 12:1-2)?

The Greek meaning of “fixing” is “to look away from all else.” Don't focus on the trial, the waves, or the half-built wall ... focus on Jesus and nothing else. That was Nehemiah's cry to his weary workers, ***“Remember the Lord who is great and awesome...”*** (Nehemiah 4:14).

Stormy Seas

Novelist and poet Robert Lewis Stephenson once recalled a powerful storm story. While on board a passenger ship, the vessel rocked through a terrible storm. Huddled in a corner below the deck, the frightened crew and passengers began to wonder, “*Are we going to die?*”

One passenger braved the pelting rain and blowing winds and made it up to the deck and over to the captain’s station. The captain was the only one remaining on deck. Realizing that the man must be deathly frightened, the captain looked back at the man and smiled a confident smile ... not a word was said. The once frightened passenger returned below deck with a renewed calm and reported, “*There is nothing to be afraid of! Everything is going to be fine. I have seen the face of the captain, and he smiled at me.*”

As an old hymn beautifully says, “*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full on His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory*

and grace.” Fixing your gaze on Jesus allows Him to melt away the worries and cares of this world. He is greater than any trial you will face, and when you are fixed on Him, you come to believe that truth.

He is Able

Whatever you may be facing right now in life, remember that the Lord is GREAT and AWESOME! He is able to do the impossible. *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20).* God is able to do far beyond what you and I can comprehend or imagine. He is able, even if you and I are not. Remember who He is, and remember what He’s called you to do.

Adrian Rogers was famous for this statement: *“Don’t doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light.”* Remember what He has called you to do.

When the Dark Times Come

For the weary builders of the walls of Jerusalem, it was a time of darkness where the enemy said, *“We’re surrounding you to attack when you least expect it. We’re going to kill you and stop this work on the wall.”* Their endeavor started with such promise and excitement ... *“The God of heaven will give us success, therefore we His servants will arise and build”* (Nehemiah 2:20).

But now, it’s nighttime on that promise, and the people are ready to bail. Don’t doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. Go back and remember what He first called you to do ... what He first told you. Nehemiah reminded the people, *“Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome”* (Nehemiah 4:14).

It’s tough to be a Christian. Anyone who tells you differently is lying because our world is opposed to Christians. The devil wants to silence and cripple Christians. He wants to destroy the work of God. Living for

Christ is painful, but there's no progress without pain.

Jesus' Example

Think about Jesus ... what was His life like? Think about His sacrifice for your salvation. He experienced tremendous pain for you and me. They ripped out His beard, spit in His face, whipped His back, and beat Him mercilessly. They stretched Him out on a cruel Roman cross and hammered spikes in His hands and feet.

It hurt God the Father to watch His Son endure such torture, but it was worth it for God to give His Son. It was worth it for the Son to give His life so that there could be progress ... so that you and I could come to know Christ. ***“Remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and FIGHT!”***

Stand Up and Fight

As we've seen, discouragement comes when you lose your focus. Nehemiah's workers were exhausted, weak and scared of the opposing forces. Nehemiah, an ingenious leader who listened to the Lord, did something interesting in Nehemiah chapter 4: ***"I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows ... remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses"*** (Nehemiah 4:13,14).

He gave them something to fight for. Our families, our churches, and our nation are worth fighting for, and all of them are in jeopardy of slipping through our fingers if we are not willing to stand up and fight.

Do you know what happens when believers stand and fight? The Lord Almighty fights for us. Nehemiah knew this and encouraged his people saying, ***"At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us"***

(Nehemiah 4:20). But here is the kicker: God will not fight for you if you do not show up for battle.

Maybe your marriage is failing. You need to remember the Lord who is great and awesome and FIGHT! You need to fight for your marriage, fight for your family. You need to fight with prayer. Don't let the devil steal, kill and destroy anymore (John 10:10). *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7).

INSIGHT #4: DISCOURAGEMENT COMES WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR VALUE.

In Nehemiah 6, we get one last bullet in our fight against discouragement. The wall is nearing completion, but the enemies of God are still working feverishly to stop the work. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem the Arab are spreading false rumors about Nehemiah. They demand a sit-down meeting in a place called Ono. Nehemiah's answer to their

request is classic, *“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?”* (Nehemiah 6:3).

Did you catch what Nehemiah called what they were doing? He called it a “great work.” The enemies of God called the wall a pitiful joke, not even able to support a little fox. But that was a lie. The truth was they were building a great wall and doing a great work for a great God.

Discouragement comes when you lose your value. It comes when you start to believe the lie that what you are doing for God is crummy and worthless and a waste of time.

Nehemiah knew that what he and the people were doing was great. Listen, my friend, if you are walking with God and desiring to please Him, whatever He has led you to do is a GREAT WORK! Don’t believe for one second that your calling, whatever that calling might be, is second rate and meaningless. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Perhaps you are a stay-at-home mom, spending your days cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and changing dirty diapers. Perhaps you get very little encouragement from your husband and children. Perhaps you are beginning to wonder if you should just go back to work so you can make your life count and help the family. LISTEN TO ME, stay-at-home mom ... YOU ARE DOING A GREAT WORK by staying home with your children. You are making a difference for Jesus in the lives of those kids. Don't lose sight of your value!!

Perhaps you are a pastor of a small church. Nothing seems to be going very well. Your hard work just seems to be pitiful, weak and making no impact. Maybe you are thinking you should just quit. NO!! Keep at it. If you are doing a work that is God-ordained and God-directed, it is a great work, even if it is something as seemingly "unspiritual" as building a wall around a city.

The Rest of My Story

When I was so discouraged in those early days of seminary, I was asking the Lord why on earth He brought me to North Carolina. Why was He putting me “on the shelf” and not using me for anything? Why call me into the ministry and then keep me on the sidelines? I was pouring out my heart and my frustrations to the Lord.

The Lord answered me in this way (not an audible voice, but a still, small voice that spoke to my heart). *“Jeff, who is this about, you or Me? Am I not the Master and you the servant? If I want you to just cool your jets for a while, be a student, and learn and grow ... should that not be okay with you, the servant?”*

I was cut to the quick. I said, *“Lord I am so sorry for secretly thinking and acting as if it were all about me. Lord, my number one job in life is to please You. If You are pleased by me being on the sidelines for a while, then I am all for it. I want to live to bring glory to*

Jesus and please my Savior, my friend, and my Master.”

That simple, heartfelt prayer made all the difference in the world. Maybe you need to pray a prayer like that too and trust God to see you through as you stare in the face of discouragement.

Will you stand and fight?

As God’s own dear sons and daughters, will you join me in standing up to the devil’s discouragement? Will you practice the biblical truths that are shared in this booklet? When you are facing life’s trials, look to see if you are listening to the lies and ridicule of discouragers. Are there Sanballats and Tobiahs in your life? Lovingly and gracefully, distance yourself from them.

Then evaluate if you need physical or spiritual rest ... even a warrior like John Rambo took breaks. *“You will break the bow if you keep it always bent.”*

And finally, ask yourself if you have lost your focus and lost your value. If so, get your

focus back on the Lord; remember who He is; remember what He has called you to do; and stand up and fight!

God gave Nehemiah the task of rallying the Israelites to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem. It was difficult, daunting, wearisome, and painful ... but they did it! They did what the naysayers said couldn't be done, and they accomplished the feat in fifty-two days. What a miracle!

God is looking for people who will say, *"That's me! I'm going to do what He has called me to do and trust Him for a miracle."* What about you? Will you stand in the face of discouragement and fight? Show up for the battle, speak the truth, keep your eyes on Jesus, and watch the King of kings and Lord of lords do the impossible.

Other Resources from Jeff Schreve

AUDIO CD and VIDEO DVD* Series

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- A20** Why On Earth Am I Here: Vol. 2
- A30** Guess Who's Coming for Christmas
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- A50** Wise Up!
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- A340* Take This Life and Love It**
- A350* Believing God...Expecting Miracles**
- A360* Missing in Action**
- A370* Pit Falls-From the Depths to Deliverance**
- A380* And They Lived Happily Ever After**
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- A490 Now That's a Tough One**
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WHEN FEAR MEETS FAITH
I STILL DO
STICKS AND STONES: What to Do When the Going Gets Tough
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