

**NEHEMIAH**  
**RESISTANCE**  
week of September 19, 2021  
**NEHEMIAH 4:1-14 (ESV)**



**big idea of the week:**

Leaders, if your discussion veers off the rails, you can try to steer the conversation back to this theme. When we meet resistance, our response as Christ followers is to stay anchored in the character of God through every means available.

**12 South Congregation**

**OPEN**

**welcome:** Connect and check in with everyone briefly before the study starts.

**opening prayer:** Feel free to ask someone to open with prayer, asking God to speak to through his word.

**purpose:** To be changed by Jesus; submitting to the Holy Spirit, scripture, and each other for transformation.

**guidelines:** Please read, review, or discuss weekly. The group guidelines are listed on the last page.

**icebreaker:** If you could live anywhere for a year, where would you live and why?

**STORY**

**setting the scene:** A brief context for the passage. See last page.

**tell the story:** Encourage people to engage with the storyteller rather than look at the handout.

**rebuild the story:** Try different ways of doing this.

**read the passage:** Always close by reading the passage out loud.

**HEAD**

**to help us examine what the word shows**

Leaders, edit/omit questions as needed for your group.

(spend about 15 minutes here)

- How do Nehemiah and the people respond to opposition to the rebuilding of the wall?
- Read Eph 6:10 - 20. How do these verses shape your understanding of what it means to be a person who belongs to the Lord and is participating in his mission?
- What do you learn about God from this passage?

**HEART**

**to help us wrestle with what we believe**

It's important to use "I" statements here.

(spend about 30 minutes here)

- How do you respond internally to external opposition to the Gospel?
- What happens if you don't expect to encounter opposition to a life of following Jesus?
- Where do you currently need to hear the words of verse 14 (or of John 16:33)?
- In verse 14, Nehemiah directs the people to the character of God. What attributes of God, or verses from Scripture, anchor you in times of discouragement?

**HANDS**

**to help bring the truth into our everyday realities**

Try to avoid creating a checklist of things to do better.

(spend about 10 minutes here)

- How might our discussion tonight change the way that you pray this week?
- What could defending yourself against opposition look like this week?

**closing prayer:** O Christ Jesus, when all is darkness and we feel our weakness and helplessness, give us the sense of your presence, your love, and your strength. Help us to have perfect trust in your protecting love and strengthening power, so that nothing may frighten or worry us, for, living close to you, we shall see your hand, your purpose, your will through all things. Amen. [St. Ignatius]

**next week's passage:** Ask for a volunteer to story the passage for next week: **Nehemiah 4:15-23**

## LEADER NOTES

### ADDITIONAL READING

Isaiah 30, Ephesians 6:10-20, John 16:33

## NOTE FROM GROUPS TEAM

**Why do we meet?** We seek to remind ourselves each week that groups at Midtown exist for discipleship. As God's people gather around His Word, we are changed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ. That is groups' ultimate purpose! Reviewing our purpose in gathering each week helps group members and visitors set healthy expectations. Ask your group: If you've been in other church groups, what was the purpose of the gathering?

View "Casting Vision" in Leader Resources on the Church Center app, on [midtownfellowship.org/leaderresources](http://midtownfellowship.org/leaderresources), or on page 18 of the Groups Apprentice Manual.

## NOTE FROM THE PASTORS

What a dramatic sequence of events: there is opposition to the wall, taunts, the wall continues to grow, and in response, the threats of the enemies get even more dire and direct, with Nehemiah placing people in the gaps of the wall to scare off the invaders and giving a rousing speech for the defense of the city. This is a great week to make sure that you rebuild the narrative after someone "stories." Remember, "storying" isn't about someone providing their interpretation of the text, it is simply retelling the story in their own words. When you rebuild this week, consider offering the first fact, and asking "then what happened?" until you get to the end.

A potential sand trap this week may be Nehemiah's prayer against his enemies. This seems to be a far cry from Jesus' command to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Neh 5:43-48). Nehemiah's prayer here isn't the only example of this kind of language in Scripture, in fact it happens all over the Psalms. A few things to keep in mind... Nehemiah is crying out for justice from God, to be accomplished by God, on account of his enemies' opposition to God. He is asking God to take His own glory seriously, rather than taking matters into his (Nehemiah's) own hands. God alone has the wisdom and right to judge the peoples of the earth, which one day he will do.

The goal tonight is to acknowledge that we face opposition of all kinds when participating in God's work in the world. While many narrow their focus to the political realm, in reality, our opposition comes externally (from other people and from spiritual forces) and internally (from our own discouragement). In the face of this opposition, Nehemiah calls the people to not be controlled by fear, to remember the Lord "who is great and awesome," and to arm up and defend themselves. While the ways that we defend ourselves today is different (because we aren't a theocracy), the call to defend ourselves and those we love against spiritual enemies is very relevant today.

-The Pastoral Team

# NEHEMIAH RESISTANCE

week of September 19, 2021

## NEHEMIAH 4:1-14 (ESV)

### Discipleship Group Guidelines:

- **Safe Group:** We strive for an environment where everyone can be open, and honest about his or her struggles and victories.
- **Confidentiality:** What is said in the group stays in the group. Whether in person or on video, please meet in a private place.
- **Listen:** We want to value one another by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond while someone is sharing.
- **Pause:** Allowing a pause in the conversation after one person shares and before the next person shares gives the person sharing a chance to finish. A Pause also gives the group an opportunity to consider before responding.
- **Silence:** It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for people to think deeply, to gather their thoughts in order to share, and to genuinely consider what others have shared.
- **One Conversation at a Time:** Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.
- **No Fixing:** We are not here to fix each other; Jesus does that part. Give encouragement and ask questions, but try not to solve or fix one another.
- **No Rescuing:** When people are sharing something deeply personal, please resist the tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or their situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause people to stop sharing.
- **Be Self-Aware:** Be mindful of how you are personally affecting the small group environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication. Be sensitive about the amount of time you share, whether too much (dominating) or not enough (hiding).
- **Use “I” Statements:** It is very easy to talk about other people’s issues, but, for our purposes, we want to put ourselves on the table. We will use “I” statements rather than “them”, “the church”, “people”, “you”, “us”, “we”, etc.
- **Resolve Conflict Biblically:** As a group we commit to extend grace to one another. Conflict is not bad, rather it can be an opportunity for growth. We are all being transformed to be more like Jesus, so conflict and change are a part of that journey. (Matthew 18)
- **Manage Technology:** Let’s respect one another by silencing other alerts on our devices.



### Setting the Scene

The work, led by Nehemiah, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem has begun. But the Jews are not the only inhabitants of the land, and not everyone around the city is thrilled at the prospect of a well fortified and restored Jerusalem.



### Scripture

#### Nehemiah 4:1-14 (ESV)

1 Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. 2 And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves?[b] Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?” 3 Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!” 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. 5 Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

6 So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

7 [c] But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. 8 And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. 9 And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

10 In Judah it was said,[d] “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.” 11 And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.” 12 At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.”[e] 13 So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “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 homes.”