

Title: Nehemiah: Courageous Through Adversity
Theme: Honor Begins At Home/Graduation Sunday
Focal Scripture: Nehemiah 4:1-20
Big Idea: Our adversity is never greater than our God.
Date: June 3, 2012
Place: DCOG

This is an awesome day for our graduates. They have reached a milestone in their journey through life. Congratulations to our graduates!

Now, what is the next step? Where do we go from here? What will the journey be like? Will it be awesome or will it be filled with adversity?

I. “Discouragement can take any of us at any time.”

YouTube video about Dick and Rick Hoyt...

Nicole Mullen My Redeemer Lives lyrics (Hoyt)

Communicate that all people struggle with staying faithful during times of adversity.

II. “Do you ever feel like giving up?”

- A. Have you ever felt like you have prayed, hoped, and tried so much with no success that you simply felt like giving up.
- B. Highlight those who are trying to change things in their lives and in their homes due to the *Courageous* study, but are facing tremendous obstacles. Maybe you are trying to make a change but discouragement is coming from every side.

- C. “You are not alone.” Most all of us have felt the same way and countless men and women of God before us have shared the same struggles.
- a When Nehemiah went with a group of God’s people to rebuild the wall, he faced much opposition and adversity.
 - b At one time, the adversity was so much, some thought the wall would never be completed.
 - c Nehemiah’s resolve can serve as an encouragement to us today.

III. Nehemiah 4:1-20

Neh. 4:1-20

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, ²and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble--burned as they are?"

³Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building--if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!"

⁴Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. ⁵Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.

⁶So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

⁷But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. ⁸They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. ⁹But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

¹⁰Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."

¹¹Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work."

¹²Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."

¹³Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.

¹⁴After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."

¹⁵When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work.

¹⁶From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah ¹⁷who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, ¹⁸and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

19 Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall.

20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!"

* Give background of the history leading up to this point in Scripture so everyone will understand the significance and the challenges associated with rebuilding this wall.

- A. Adversity is promised (see vv. 1-9).
 - a When Nehemiah set out to rebuild the wall, the enemies came to discourage God's people.
 - b They faced adversity in the form of ridicule (see vv. 1-4) and threats (see vv. 5-9).
 - c It started with verbal adversity and escalated to danger.
- B. When we try to follow God, we are promised adversity.

2 Tim. 3:12

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

- a Do not think that obstacles reveal a closed door; rather, many times they are an open door to trust God.
- C. Discouragement is inevitable (see Neh. 4:10-14).
 - a With the adversity, God's people became discouraged.
 - b They wanted to follow God, but fear immobilized them.

- c Nehemiah rushed to the scene to encourage them.
- d He actually placed men at the exposed places of the wall to defend against any attack.
- e To ensure they would fight with the greatest effort, he put the men's families with them as a last line of defense.

D. God is greater (see vv. 15-20).

- a Even though the adversity was real and the circumstances seemed too much for the Israelites to succeed, God was shown as greater and more powerful than their adversity.
- b Nehemiah simply reminded the people of how powerful God was and told them to stand their ground.
- c Nehemiah proved to be true with God, allowing the people to successfully rebuild the wall amidst such adversity.

IV. What do you want to do about it?

YouTube video about Derek Redmond...

Derek Redmond-You raise me up version

Sometimes the adversity doesn't go away. But our adversity is never greater than our God.

Invite those who need prayer to stay courageous during their adversity to come down for prayer. Have others come and pray with them.

Adapted from Michael Catt, "The Courage to Face Criticism" in *Courageous Living* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 103–16.