

# Rising From the Ruins

## Perseverance and Patience

*Nehemiah 4-7*

### Leaders Guide

The wall is going up thanks to the cooperation and partnership of all the people in Jerusalem. But not everyone is happy. The same troublemakers are at it again. If that wall gets completed they feel that their control and power will be threatened. So they set out to do everything in their power to stop the building. Now the Israelites need more than prayer and partnership, they need perseverance and patience.

### Perseverance

Any long term project can get hijacked. People get tired. Little obstacles become mountains. Outsiders with an ax to grind throw up obstacles both physical as well as psychological. Rebuilding the wall in Jerusalem was no exception. Perseverance was necessary.

Perseverance: **Definition:** Steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement. **Hebrew:** *radaph*—to run after, chase, pursue.

Read Nehemiah 4.

Answer the following questions:

#### Level A

- Who tried to sabotage the wall building effort and what tactics did they use?
- How did Nehemiah fight back against the negativity?
- What role did trust and faith have in Nehemiah's response? How did this help the Israelites to keep going?

## Level B

- What types of opposition did Nehemiah and the Israelites face? What was Nehemiah's response and counter strategy?
- How do these verses demonstrate Nehemiah's strong faith? Read Romans 5:3-4 and James 1:2-4. How do they echo Nehemiah's attitude?
- Compare your response to overcoming threats and problems with Nehemiah. What strategies and tactics do you use to help you persevere when you encounter obstacles?

## Level C

- Compare the actions and tactics of Nehemiah's opponents to situations you have encountered in the past. What example does Nehemiah give us in how to overcome roadblocks in life?
- How can the church use Nehemiah's strategies when they run into difficulties?
- Read Romans 5:3-5, 1 Cor 13:6-7, 2 Thess 1:4, Heb 12:1, James 1:2-4, Rev 2:3. How is Nehemiah an example of these verses? How do these verses encourage you?
- Nehemiah also faced internal issues (see 4:10 and 12). How does the New Testament address this kind of discouragement (Gal 6:9, 2 Thess 3:13, Heb 12:3)?

## Economic Crisis

As if Nehemiah didn't have enough problems getting the wall built, Jerusalem was facing an economic crisis. The poor were going hungry because they couldn't afford food. The farmers were mortgaged to the max because their fields were not producing and they were in danger of losing their property. Business owners and landowners couldn't afford the cost of doing business, so they were forced to borrow money at exorbitant interest rates or sell their children into slavery. And the wealthy and powerful were right in there taking advantage of the situation. Inflation, famine, taxes, higher prices, usury, slavery—things were a mess. So the people went to their governor, Nehemiah, to complain.

Read Nehemiah 5

Answer the following questions:

#### Level A

- How did Nehemiah feel about the situation that the people were in? What did he do?
- To whom did Nehemiah speak and what was his major complaint? What was his solution?
- How did Nehemiah set an example for the other officials to follow?

#### Level B

- How were the leaders disobeying God's laws and taking advantage of their fellow exiles? (see also Ex 22:25, Lev 25:35-43)
- What did Nehemiah say and do to address and alleviate the situation so that the building could continue? What is the significance of taking an oath?
- Why was it important that Nehemiah set an example? (Ne 5:14-18) Give an example from your life where a leader sets an example for others to follow.

#### Level C

- The problems that the Israelites faced are familiar to us even today. Is Nehemiah's type of outrage felt today or are we numb to these issues? Why or why not?
- Why was it important for the leaders to "get back on track" and follow the teachings of their faith? (see also Ex 22:25, Lev 25:35-43) Give examples of leaders that you feel have followed the teachings of their faith. How did Nehemiah set the example?
- Look at verse 5:13. In those days, garments were simply many folds of cloth held together with a belt. The folds acted as pockets for collecting and carrying things. When one shook out the folds, it meant that you would lose everything you were carrying. Explain how this dramatic act and statement of Nehemiah's would have been shocking and impactful to the people he was talking with.

### Patience Before the Finish

The enemies were at it again. With the distractions of the economy, this was a great time to undermine Nehemiah. But Nehemiah was a smart leader and God was on his side.

Read Nehemiah 6:1-7:3

Answer the following questions:

#### Level A

- What was the scheme of Sanballat and his cronies to undermine Nehemiah's reputation? How did Nehemiah respond?
- How did Shemaiah try to ruin the integrity of Nehemiah? (see Num 18:7) Why was Nehemiah not caught by their lies?
- What effect did finishing the wall have on the enemies?
- Why did Nehemiah choose Hananiah to be in charge of the security of Jerusalem?

#### Level B

- Sanballat and Shemaiah both attacked the reputation and integrity of Nehemiah. Why do you think that was the focus of their schemes? How important is reputation and integrity in a leader?
- The wall was finished in record time. What do you think were the main reasons for its timely completion? To whom does Nehemiah give the credit?
- Read Romans 8:31. How does this verse echo Nehemiah?

#### Level C

- Think of current examples of enemies using tactics similar to Sanballat and Shemaiah to discredit leaders. Have those leaders held up as well as Nehemiah? Why or why not?
- How is the swift completion of the wall a testimony to the importance of Nehemiah's consistent fellowship with God? (see also Romans 8:31)
- Author Derek Kidner says, "Of all biblical characters, Nehemiah is perhaps the most explicit on 'the practice of the presence of God.'" Explain what you think he means by that. What things might you change in your life to become more like Nehemiah?