



Disciplined Enough to Look Past Distractions (Part Three)

May 18, 2025

Series Outline

- Embracing the Disciplined to **Hear** (Nehemiah 1:2-11)
- Embracing the Discipline to Be a **Mom** (Nehemiah 3: 12; 8:2-3; 10:28)
- Embracing the Discipline to Look Past **Distractions** (Nehemiah 4-6)
- Embracing the Discipline to **Finish** (Nehemiah 5:15-16)

Text: Nehemiah 4 & 6 (Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem)

- When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became **angry** and was greatly incensed. He **ridiculed** the Jews, 2 and **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?”
- 3 Tobiah the **Ammonite**, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!” ([Nehemiah 4:1–3](#), NIV)

I. Four Foolish Distractions

1. They expressed **misplaced anger** (v.1)
2. They **ridiculed** what they could not control (v.1)
3. They tried to publicly **humiliate** them (v.2 “In the presence of his associates..)
4. They **doubted** their abilities (vv.2-3, He called them feeble)

Note: I included eight tactics used to discourage and distract Nehemiah in the bonus notes below.

Question:

- What person or group intimidates and distracts you?
- What is the real reason people in your life struggle with your dream?
- Who or what thoughts mock you unfairly?
- Who or what thoughts define your limits?

Note: What Were the Real Issues?

- In this story Sanballat was the governor of Samaria and felt threatened by the potential re-emerging of a restored Israel.
- The King of Persia found favor in Nehemiah and stepped over the insecurity of these leaders
 - Tobiah the Ammonite belonged to a group historically opposed to Israel (see Deuteronomy 23:3–4)
 - Geshem was probably motivated by financial concerns¹

II. How Did They Respond To the Distractions

Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. **Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity.** 5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders. 6 So **we rebuilt the wall** till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. ([Nehemiah 4:4–6](#), NIV)

1. They **prayed** (v4)
2. They **let God to handle them** (v4-5)
3. They **kept on building** (v6)
4. They **worked with excitement** (v6)

III. What Do We Learn From Their Response

1. **Know your enemy**
2. **Plan for your enemy**
3. **Trust God to help you**
4. **Keep your eyes open and don't be naive (They divided by family and prepared)**

¹

https://biblehub.com/topical/r/renewed_opposition_from_sanballat_tobiah_and_geshem.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com



Question: How many things have you allowed someone or something to distract you and stop you from advancing in your life? What is not built because you allowed this one thing to stop you?

Next Time: Disciplined Enough to Finish

Read Ahead: Nehemiah 6:15–16

Bonus Notes

Major Events Used to Discourage and Distract Nehemiah

1. Mockery and Ridicule (Nehemiah 2:19; 4:1–3)

- Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem mocked Nehemiah's plan.
- They said things like: "What are these feeble Jews doing?" and "Even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall!"
- Purpose: Make them feel foolish and incapable.

2. Conspiracy of Violence (Nehemiah 4:7–8)

- Enemies (Sanballat, Tobiah, Arabs, Ammonites, Ashdodites) plotted to attack Jerusalem and create confusion.
- Purpose: Intimidate them with the threat of physical harm.

3. Discouragement from Fear and Exhaustion (Nehemiah 4:10–12)

- The Jews themselves started saying:
 - "The strength of the laborers is giving out."
 - "We can't rebuild the wall."
 - And they feared enemy attacks.
- Purpose: Break their spirits internally through fear and tiredness.

4. Internal Conflict — Economic Oppression (Nehemiah 5:1–13)

- Some Jewish nobles and officials were charging interest and taking property from poor Jewish families.
- Purpose: Create division and injustice inside the community, distracting from the mission.

5. Political Plots — Fake Meetings (Nehemiah 6:1–4)

- Sanballat and Geshem invited Nehemiah to meet on the plain of Ono — five times.
- It was a trap to harm him.
- Purpose: Isolate and ambush Nehemiah away from his support system.

6. False Accusations and Smear Campaigns (Nehemiah 6:5–9)

- They spread rumors that Nehemiah was trying to make himself king and rebel against Persia.
- They even wrote an “open letter” so everyone would hear the false accusation.
- Purpose: Turn political authorities against Nehemiah and cause panic.

7. Religious Manipulation — Hiring a False Prophet (Nehemiah 6:10–14)

- Shemaiah (a supposed prophet) was paid by Tobiah and Sanballat to trick Nehemiah into hiding in the temple (which would be a sin for a layman).
- Purpose: Destroy Nehemiah’s credibility by making him look cowardly or disobedient to God.

8. Noble Betrayal and Secret Communications (Nehemiah 6:17–19)

- Some Judah nobles were loyal to Tobiah because of family marriages.
- They praised Tobiah to Nehemiah and spied for Tobiah.
- Tobiah also sent threatening letters to scare Nehemiah.
- Purpose: Undermine Nehemiah’s leadership internally and pressure him through intimidation.

