



Small Group Guide – October 22 & 25

Under Construction – Building Together Through Opposition

Date: October 22 & 25, 2026

Focus Passage(s): Nehemiah 3-4

Theme: God uses ordinary people working together with extraordinary faithfulness. When opposition comes, we respond with prayer, wisdom, and perseverance.

Suggested Schedule (60 minutes total)

Segment	Time	Description
Icebreaker	10 min	Get comfortable, begin connecting
Intro/Recap	5 min	Read the key passages for the week
Group Discussion	25 min	Dive into Scripture and discuss application
Deeper Dive Option	5–10 min	Deeper Bible study or individual challenge
Prayer & Requests	10–15 min	Close in prayer for growth + personal needs

Welcome + Icebreaker (10 min)

Have you ever participated in a group project where everyone had a different responsibility? What made the project successful, or what made it frustrating?

Are you someone who enjoys starting a project, finishing a project, or celebrating when someone else finishes it?

Key Message Recap

Nehemiah was a Jewish man serving the Persian king when he learned that Jerusalem's walls remained broken and its gates had been destroyed. Although he lived far away, the condition of Jerusalem deeply affected him.

Nehemiah prayed, developed a plan, received permission from the king, and traveled to Jerusalem. After carefully examining the damage, he challenged the people to begin rebuilding. The people responded enthusiastically.

Chapter 3 records the people who participated in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. At first glance, it may appear to be little more than a list of unfamiliar names and locations. But behind those names is a remarkable picture of cooperation, responsibility, and ordinary people working together for something greater than themselves.

Chapter 4 reveals that the work was not easy. Opposition intensified, the people became exhausted, and fear threatened to stop their progress.

Discussion Questions (25 min)

Everyone Has a Part to Play - Read Nehemiah 3:1-12 and 3:28-32

One of the most interesting details in Nehemiah 3 is the variety of people involved in rebuilding the wall. Priests worked alongside goldsmiths and perfume makers. Families, merchants, community leaders, and people from neighboring towns all contributed.

These individuals had different backgrounds, different abilities, and different responsibilities, but they shared a common purpose.

The message points out that Nehemiah repeatedly uses phrases such as "next to him," "next to them," and "after him." Those repeated descriptions reveal something important: the work was organized so that everyone could participate.

Nobody was responsible for rebuilding the entire wall. Each person or group was responsible for a particular section. The same principle applies to the church. God has given people different gifts, abilities, experiences, and opportunities. The church is healthiest when those differences become contributions to a shared mission rather than reasons for comparison.

Discuss

- Why do people sometimes assume they are not qualified to contribute to God's work?
- What are some gifts or abilities people have that may not seem particularly spiritual, but can still be used to serve God?

Key Truth - We are not responsible for doing everything, but we are responsible for faithfully doing our part.

God's Work Moves Forward When God's People Move Together - Read 1 Cor 12:12-27

The message connects Nehemiah 3 with Paul's description of the church as the body of Christ.

Paul explains that a body has many parts, but those parts belong to one body. Each part has a different function, and each matters.

That is exactly what we see in Jerusalem. The priests were not more important than the goldsmiths. The people working near their own homes were not more valuable than those who traveled from another town. Every section mattered because every section contributed to the strength of the entire wall.

This gives us an important picture of Christian community. Unity does not require everyone to have the same abilities, personalities, or responsibilities. Unity happens when people with different gifts are committed to the same purpose.

Discuss

- What is the difference between a group of people working individually and a group of people genuinely working together?
- Why is it important to recognize and appreciate contributions that are not highly visible?
- What can happen to a church or small group when people begin believing their contribution does not matter?

Key Truth - God's work moves forward when God's people recognize that every contribution matters and choose to work together.

Faithfulness Is Worship - Read 1 Corinthians 10:31

The people rebuilding Jerusalem's walls were doing physically demanding work. They were carrying stones, clearing rubble, repairing gates, and completing repetitive tasks.

Yet the message reminds us that their work was about more than construction. They were honoring God through what they were doing.

That broadens our understanding of worship. Worship is not limited to singing, praying, or attending church. When our work is done with a desire to honor God, even ordinary responsibilities can become expressions of worship.

That may include parenting, caring for someone who is struggling, serving behind the scenes, working with integrity, or consistently showing up for responsibilities that rarely receive recognition.

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Discuss

- How might your attitude toward work or everyday responsibilities change if you viewed them as opportunities to honor God?
- What is something you do regularly that feels insignificant, but may actually matter more than you realize?

Key Truth - Ordinary work becomes meaningful when it is offered to God with extraordinary faithfulness.

Opposition Does Not Automatically Mean We Are Doing Something Wrong

Read Nehemiah 4:1-9

As the wall begins taking shape, Sanballat and Tobiah ridicule the builders. They question the people's abilities, mock their materials, and attempt to convince them that their efforts will fail.

When ridicule does not stop the work, the opposition escalates into threats. Nehemiah does not respond by exchanging insults or abandoning the project. He prays, continues the work, and takes practical steps to protect the people.

The message explains that opposition is something followers of Jesus should expect when pursuing God's purposes. That does not mean every criticism is persecution or that every difficult situation proves we are doing God's will. It does mean we should not automatically interpret resistance as a reason to quit.

Discuss

- Why can criticism be especially discouraging when we are trying to do something good?
- How do you typically respond when someone questions your motives or abilities?
- What can we learn from Nehemiah's decision to pray rather than retaliate?

Key Truth - Opposition should lead us toward prayer, wisdom, and discernment rather than automatically causing us to quit.

Discouragement Often Comes Halfway Through Read Nehemiah 4:6 and 4:10-14

One of the most relatable details in this passage is when the discouragement begins.

At the beginning of a project, enthusiasm can carry us forward. But halfway through, we have already invested significant effort while still seeing how much remains unfinished.

The workers are tired. There is rubble everywhere. Their enemies are threatening them, and some begin wondering whether they can finish.

The message describes this as the moment when the remaining work feels bigger than our remaining strength. That experience is not limited to construction projects. We can feel it in marriage, parenting, recovery, spiritual growth, serving, or caring for someone over a long period. Sometimes discouragement does not mean we have stopped caring. It means we are exhausted.

Discuss

- Have you experienced a time when you were making progress but felt more discouraged than when you started?
- How can exhaustion affect the way we interpret our circumstances?
- What helps you continue faithfully when the excitement has worn off and the work still feels unfinished?

Key Truth - Feeling tired or discouraged does not mean our faith has failed. Sometimes perseverance means seeking God's strength and continuing together.

Remember the Lord Read Nehemiah 4:14 and 4:19-20

When fear and discouragement begin spreading, Nehemiah gathers the people and reminds them of something more important than the wall. He tells them to remember the Lord.

Nehemiah does not simply encourage them to think positively, work harder, or remember how excited they were when the project began. He directs their attention back to God's character and the purpose behind their work.

The message makes an important observation: Nehemiah combines prayer with practical action. He prays, but he also posts guards, organizes workers, and prepares for possible attacks. He refuses to choose between trusting God and acting wisely.

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Discuss

- Why is it easy to become more focused on our problems than on God's character?
- Why do prayer and responsible action belong together?
- Is there an area of your life where you need to stop relying entirely on your own strength and intentionally seek God's help?

Key Truth - Remembering who God is helps us respond faithfully to what is happening around us.

More Truth From the Gospels (10 min)

Nehemiah shows us ordinary people working together, facing opposition, and learning to depend on God.

Jesus teaches these same principles through His life and ministry. He calls ordinary people, gives them a shared mission, prepares them for difficulty, and reminds them that their strength comes from remaining connected to Him.

Jesus Calls Ordinary People

Read Matthew 4:18-22 When Jesus begins calling disciples, He does not start by recruiting the most impressive religious leaders. He calls fishermen who are working at their ordinary jobs.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John do not appear to possess extraordinary qualifications for the mission Jesus will eventually give them. What matters is their willingness to follow Him.

Foundational Truth Jesus calls ordinary people into a mission that becomes extraordinary because of Him.

Discuss What do you think these fishermen might have believed disqualified them from doing something significant for God?

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Jesus Teaches His Followers to Serve Together

Read John 13:12-17 Jesus washes His disciples' feet and then explains that He has given them an example to follow. In a culture where washing feet was considered lowly work, Jesus demonstrates that greatness in God's kingdom is expressed through humble service.

This connects beautifully with Nehemiah 3. The priests were willing to do the same difficult work as everyone else because the mission mattered more than their position.

Foundational Truth In God's kingdom, no act of faithful service is beneath us.

Discuss Why is humble, behind-the-scenes service sometimes more difficult than visible leadership?

Jesus Reminds Us Where Our Strength Comes From

Read John 15:4-5 Jesus uses the picture of a vine and branches to explain the importance of remaining connected to Him. A branch does not produce fruit through determination alone. It depends upon the life supplied by the vine.

That is an important reminder for people who are exhausted from trying to do good things. Our faithfulness matters, but we were never intended to accomplish God's work independently of Him.

Foundational Truth Lasting spiritual fruit comes from remaining connected to Jesus, not merely trying harder.

Discuss Where might you be relying more on determination than on dependence upon Jesus?

Next Steps Challenge (5 min)

Recognize that God can use you. You do not need extraordinary qualifications to participate in His work. Consider the gifts, experiences, relationships, and opportunities God has already placed in your life. Remember that you have a part to play. You are not responsible for everything. Identify the particular responsibility or opportunity God may be asking you to embrace, and look for ways to serve alongside others.

Be prepared for difficulty. Opposition and discouragement are not always signs that you should stop. When challenges come, respond with prayer, seek wisdom, and take appropriate action rather than allowing fear to make every decision.

Remember the Lord. Do not allow the size of the task or the intensity of the opposition to become larger in your mind than the God you are trusting.

Personal Challenge What is one specific step you can take this week to faithfully work on your section of the wall?

Prayer Time (10 min)

Prayer for Unity, Faithfulness, and Perseverance

Begin by thanking God that He chooses to work through ordinary people. Thank Him for the gifts, experiences, and opportunities represented in the group and for the ways He brings people together to accomplish things that no one could accomplish alone.

Ask God to help each person recognize where He is inviting them to serve. Pray for humility to value every contribution, including the work that happens quietly and receives little recognition.

Pray for those who are facing criticism, opposition, or discouragement. Ask God for wisdom to know when to persevere, when to adjust, and when to seek help. Pray especially for anyone who is exhausted from a long season of responsibility.

Finally, ask God to help the group remember His character when circumstances become difficult. Thank Jesus that we do not have to accomplish His purposes through our strength alone.

Deeper Dive - Character Study (optional)

Barnabas: Encouraging Ordinary People to Keep Building

Primary Scripture: Acts 4:32-37; Acts 9:26-28; Acts 11:19-26; Acts 15:36-41

Overview

Barnabas is one of the New Testament's clearest examples of someone who understood that God's work is accomplished through people working together.

His name means "son of encouragement," and his life consistently reflects that description.

Barnabas is not primarily remembered for spectacular miracles or for being the most prominent leader in the early church. Instead, he becomes known for generosity, encouragement, recognizing potential in others, and helping people participate in God's mission.

His story connects naturally with Nehemiah 3-4 because Barnabas understood that people need more than assignments. They need encouragement, support, and someone willing to help them remain faithful when circumstances become difficult.

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Key Moment 1: Barnabas Contributes What He Has

Read Acts 4:32-37 The early church is growing, and believers are sharing resources to meet one another's needs. Barnabas sells a field and brings the money to the apostles to help support the community.

His contribution is not presented as an attempt to gain recognition. It is an act of generosity that strengthens the larger body of believers.

Discuss What resources, gifts, or opportunities has God given you that could strengthen others?

Key Truth Faithfulness begins with offering God what He has already entrusted to us.

Key Moment 2: Barnabas Sees Potential That Others Overlook

Read Acts 9:26-28 After Saul's conversion, the believers in Jerusalem are afraid of him. They know his reputation as someone who persecuted Christians and are uncertain whether his conversion is genuine.

Barnabas steps into that situation. He brings Saul to the apostles and explains what has happened in his life. Barnabas helps create an opportunity for someone whom others are afraid to trust.

Discuss Has someone ever recognized potential in you before you recognized it in yourself?

Key Truth Sometimes our most important contribution is helping someone else recognize and use the gifts God has given them.

Key Moment 3: Barnabas Encourages a Growing Church

Read Acts 11:19-26 As the gospel spreads to Antioch, Barnabas is sent to see what is happening. He recognizes evidence of God's grace and encourages the believers to remain faithful to the Lord.

Then Barnabas travels to find Saul and brings him to Antioch, where they spend a year teaching and strengthening the church together. He recognizes that the mission will be stronger when people work together.

Discuss Why can insecurity make teamwork difficult, even within the church?

Key Truth God's work becomes stronger when we encourage others to participate rather than trying to accomplish everything ourselves.

Key Moment 4: Barnabas' Influence Extends Beyond Himself

Barnabas' contribution to the early church is difficult to measure because much of his impact comes through other people.

He helps Saul become connected to the believers in Jerusalem. He strengthens the church in Antioch. He participates in missionary work and continues investing in John Mark.

His story reminds us that not every significant contribution receives the most attention. Sometimes the person who encourages, equips, and supports others helps accomplish far more than they could have achieved alone.

Discuss What similarities do you see between Barnabas and the ordinary workers in Nehemiah 3? Which of Barnabas' qualities would you most like to develop?

Additional Scriptures for Further Study

Romans 12:3-8 Paul describes the different gifts God gives believers and encourages each person to use those gifts faithfully.

Ephesians 4:11-16 The church grows toward maturity as each part contributes and the whole body works together.

Galatians 6:2 Believers are called to carry one another's burdens, reminding us that Christian faithfulness is not meant to be lived in isolation.

Hebrews 10:23-25 Followers of Jesus are encouraged to remain committed to one another and motivate one another toward love and good works.

Colossians 3:23-24 Paul reminds believers that ordinary work can be done wholeheartedly as service to the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Christians are instructed to encourage one another and build each other up.