

## Small Group Material: New Walls, New Heart 4

### Opposition Outside, opposition inside: Neh 4, 6.1-9

*Note to leader: choose a confident, clear reader for the worship section. Tell them they will need to practise reading the passage over a song beforehand.*

**Welcome** (10 mins) 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!' When you were at school, what teasing and name calling affected you and how?

**Worship** (15 mins) We are in a spiritual battle which we often don't recognise. Jesus said, 'Be on guard, be alert' Mk 14.33. Get people to name the different ways we experience the spiritual battle using single words eg 'temptation, fear ...'

Play fairly quietly in the background this song by John Michael Talbot 'The Battle belongs to the Lord'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7uRX4srnsM>

Once the singer has stopped talking and starts singing (around 30 secs), read Ephesians 6.10-20 strongly and clearly **over the song**.

**Practise this beforehand!!** It takes about 1.30 mins.

Then turn the volume up on the song and let people listen to it or sing along with these wonderful lyrics.

Now turn it into worship and praise of our great God!

**Word** (40 mins)

*Not everyone was pleased to see the walls going up. There is always opposition from 'outside' the walls to God's kingdom advancing. But the builders themselves are also threatened and fearful - they wobble in their conviction and lose hope. Faced with opposition to the project on both sides, Nehemiah turns it into prayer and action.*

Read Nehemiah 4. 1- 14

1. Why do you think Sanballat was so opposed to Nehemiah's effort? How effective were their taunts to slowing down the work?

2. To whom does Nehemiah turn in the face of opposition, v4? What does he say that surprises you? What effect does his prayer have on his own people?

3. v7, 8, What is the next threat brought against Nehemiah and his team of helpers? How did the Jews meet this threat?

4. The next threat is primarily from within their own ranks. What is it, v10,11,12? How does Nehemiah encourage his people to persist? What does he want them to remember, v14?

5. What happens when the Jews return to work? How was the plot foiled v13, 16-28, 21-23?

6. How does Nehemiah show his dependence on God? upon strategic use of human resources? and upon his own diligence?

*For discussion*

a) Which gives you more difficulties - external criticism or internal fears? Why? What can or do you do to gain the victory over them?

b) What is one area of your life where there seems to be 'so much rubble'? What are you going to do about it? Do you need help and support? If so what?

Turn this into a time of prayer for each other. You could do b) in pairs or peel off into a men's group and a women's group.

**Witness** (20 mins)

Pray for:

**Christians in Parliament** (For some suggestions of how to pray

<https://www.christiansinparliament.org.uk/get-involved/pray/>)

or

**Students at Universities** (You can pray generally for the challenges students face as well as for any particular students you know or get a few prayer points from <https://www.uccf.org.uk/pray/focus.htm>)

**Get a date in the diary for a Small Group Christmas social** - before the Carol Service on 15th Dec

**Advance warning.** Collection week for Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child (Shoe Box appeal!) is 11-18th November...