

Nehemiah 4

MAIN POINT: When facing a trial or difficulty, stay connected to our purpose, pray and set up protection, and gain God's perspective.

Purpose and Prayer:

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 4:1–3. Then ask group members to respond to these questions:

- **What do you think motivated Sanballat to use these childish taunts and ridicule?**
- **How does ridicule tend to make a person question his or her abilities, purpose, or worth?**
- **How or when have you faced ridicule as an adult? Who insulted you and why do you think they did that?**
- **What effect did the ridicule have on you?**

Next, have a volunteer read aloud Nehemiah 4:4–6. Then ask group members to respond to these questions:

- **How comfortable are you in expressing to God your hurt or anger toward others? Why do you answer the way you do?**
- **How has your relationship with God helped you withstand or overcome the ridicule, disbelief or opposition of others?**
- **Pastor Andy said that we can overcome ridicule by re-connecting to the purpose of our calling and that a great way to stay connected to your purpose is to celebrate the small wins. What are some “halfway” points for which you can celebrate and praise God?**
- **How have you seen progress in our church accomplishing our mission (To Present Christ as Savior; Pursue Christ as King; Partner with Christ in Service)?**

[LEADER NOTE: Please record the group's responses to this question and forward the list to Rick. He will collate all the groups' responses and send them to our church leaders.]

Prayer & Protection:

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 4:7–9, 16–18. Then ask group members to respond to these questions:

- **Sanballat and his allies threatened the people of Jerusalem with physical force. What similarities and differences do you see between verbal abuse and physical harm?**
- **What threats or obstacles from outside forces are you facing right now?**
- **What threats or obstacles from outside forces is our church facing?**
- **What are some ways you have found that prayer and action combined are helpful and effective?**

Perspective:

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 4:10–15. Then ask group members to respond to these questions:

- **When the people of Jerusalem faced the threat from Sanballat's armies they grew discouraged, which Pastor Andy described as the loss of confidence or enthusiasm. Would you say this internal threat of discouragement is more, or less, or equally as harmful as the threat of physical force? Why do you say that?**
- **When has our church attempted to follow God's call to do something big?**
- **What are some partially accomplished ministry initiatives or programs that you see our church needing to complete?**

[LEADER NOTE: Please record the group's responses to this question and the next question, then forward the list to Rick. He will collate all the groups' responses and send them to our church leaders.]

- **What are our biggest threats: internal or external?**
- **In what area of your life does there seem to be a lot of "rubble"? In what ways are you cooperating with others and trusting God to build something useful from that rubble?**
- **How are we as a church doing the same?**

Prayer: Spend time praying for each other's lives, work, and ministry. When you have finished, pray aloud this closing prayer from our worship service on Sunday:

Almighty and merciful God, in your goodness keep us, we pray, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready both in mind and body, may accomplish with free hearts those things which belong to your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.