

Life Group Topic #6
NOT ANGRY ENOUGH
Nehemiah 4:1-9; 11-12

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

What makes you really angry?

WORSHIP: (15 minutes)

Use whatever means possible to turn the group's attention to the wonder and majesty of our God- including music, prayer, Bible meditation and other art forms.

WORD APPLICATION: (45 minutes)

Briefly read or paraphrase the following sermon summary before moving to the heart of this section: the discussion around the application questions.

Conflict is inevitable, but opposition to God's work has a source beyond human vehicles. When Nehemiah delivered his papers from King Artaxerxes to the governors around Jerusalem, the gauntlet was thrown down. When Sanballat responded to the people who were saying LETS REBUILD by accusing them of rebelling against the king, Nehemiah clearly drew a line in the sand when he said in 2:20...*this territory is not yours, it belongs to the God of heaven.* The issue was clear and the battle would not be long in coming.

OPPOSITION BY MOCKERY ...v 1-3

Sanballat's ridicule rose out of rage and fear...the status quo was being changed and now the great puppeteer Satan would seek to use human against human to accomplish his goal of hindering or halting the work of God. So the ruler of Samaria arrives with his troops to yell at the people working on the walls...*he ridiculed the Jews.* A re-furbished Jerusalem would affect Sanballat's personal agenda...seeing Samaria prosper. Note the underlying strategy of the ridicule. (Read vs. 1-3).

- *What are these feeble Jews doing... Will they restore their wall...* the strategy was to play on the doubts already in their minds.
- *Will they offer sacrifices...* he was ridiculing their faith in God. Did they really think that prayer was going to build these walls? Were they already wondering about their hope in God, their faith in Him? The arrows of the enemy always are aimed at the gaps in our armor.
- *Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are.* Sanballat was saying that the stones were worthless. They weren't but **disinformation was useful to the enemy**
- *What they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones...* they had poured their heart and soul into this project and someone on the outside, **Tobiah, now plays on their fears that they were not expert builders and perhaps all that effort had been wasted.**

THE RESPONSE OF PRAYER...v 4-9

A leader's role is critical and Nehemiah turns to prayer. The huge temptation would have been verbal rebuttal. This multi-pronged attack came in the space of a few moments and the only defense was divine. **He told God on them.**

You can never separate your humanity from your prayer life...Nehemiah was angry. **Derek Kidner** says that imprecatory prayers like this...*have the shocking immediacy of a scream, to startle us into feeling something of the desperation which produced them.* Nehemiah has been attacked personally and his motives questioned but more importantly these enemies have sinned against God by opposing His work and sinned against His people by maligning their efforts.

Nehemiah does not want their sin overlooked. They ridiculed a venture that God inspired and planned...God's honor is at stake.

However, Paul said that it was possible to be angry and not sin. (Eph 4:26)

Perhaps the absence of anger can be an alarming symptom among us. Our age will be noted for its inclination to worship at the shrine of tolerance, but are we moved about the honor of God and His work?.

The enemy was stopped by Nehemiah's angry prayer that was deeply concerned for God's honor. The enemy attacks our personal walls and the walls of God's building project, the church. But the Spirit of God causes a deep anger against his incursions and the debilitating effect he is having on God's people and His work.

Is this His word to you...not angry enough.

Word Application Questions:

Please keep in mind that these questions are meant as catalysts designed to get the group talking about life application.

- 1. Read and reflect on the text in Nehemiah 4:1-9. How did Nehemiah and the Jews respond to the ridicule? How would you have responded?**
- 2. What stands out to you in Nehemiah's prayer in vs. 4-9? In what ways could that be a pattern for our prayers?**
- 3. Consider Ephesians 4:26. When is it okay for us to be angry?**
- 4. In what ways can our anger reflect the character of God?**
- 5. What potential good can come from righteous anger in our lives?**
- 6. Consider Tozer's quote: *We have learned to live with un-holiness and have come to look upon it as the natural and expected thing.* **Is this true today? What must happen to move us from tolerance to anger?****
- 7. In what ways has Satan attacked our church? Your personal life?**
- 8. Does it make you angry? Are we angry enough?**

WITNESS: (15 minutes)

This section is a vision-casting time designed to get the group strategizing and making concrete plans towards reaching outward to a lost world. Relational outreach always has the goal of ultimately enfolded those we reach into the Life Group.