

Life Group Topic #7
A CROP OF DWARFS
Nehemiah 4:8-23

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

If you were an Olympic athlete representing Canada in these games, what sport would you choose and why?

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.

Before Shane Hipps became a pastor, he was a former strategic planner in advertising. In both vocations, he has learned a great deal about how technology quietly shapes people. In an interview Hipps discussed the damage being done by the internet. He said:

The internet has created a permanent puberty of the mind. We get locked in so much information, and the inability to sort that information meaningfully limits our capacity to understand. The last stage of knowledge is wisdom. But we are miles from wisdom because the Internet encourages the opposite of what creates wisdom—stillness, time, and inefficient things like suffering. On the Internet, there is no such thing as waiting; there is no such thing as stillness. There is a constant churning.

"From the Printing Press to the iPhone," Christianity Today magazine (May 2009), p. 64

Maturity is mentioned 7 times in the NIV translation of the NT and it speaks of...

- Being brought to its end or finished
- Needing nothing more for completeness

That is our goal as individuals and as a church...to experience maturity. The metaphor that the book of Nehemiah uses is the building of a wall but the true focus is maturity...being brought to Christ-likeness. Without growing in maturity we remain dwarfs.

God is not raising a crop of dwarfs so there will be...

OPPOSITION BY FEAR... v 7-9; 11-12

Morale is high after the first phase of opposition and the wall is moving forward and the strategy of the enemy shifts. The demoralizing intent of their mockery had failed and the new strategy was the threat of terrorist activity. King Artaxerxes had authorized this construction project so they could not openly attack. However, they could rally their troops outside the walls and they could start rumors of imminent attack.

The strategy moves the people and their leadership to prayer...(v 9) *but we prayed to our God. There is an absolute necessity to involvement in prayer because the subtlety of the enemy is often beyond our ability to comprehend and discern.*

The enemy started a whispering campaign...verses 11-12 make clear that the enemies knew the power of planting thoughts of fear in people's minds and then having them repeated by people who were trusted.

Once this begins it is humanly unstoppable...from *the people worked with all their heart* in v 6 they were overwhelmed with *the strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall*. **Discouragement always distorts reality**. Just a few days before they had completed the wall to half its height but that was now forgotten. The words, *we cannot*, will destroy the objective of rebuilding the wall.

The enemy wields fear as an awesome weapon. The rubble and tiredness had always been there but now it was being experienced through the lens of fear...*before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work*. Add to that the compounding effect of verse 12...*then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us*. Discouragement and outright terror was present in the camp of God.

Nehemiah's strategy is significant...

- He mobilized people to provide coverage of the lowest parts of the wall...
- He reminded all the people of what was important...
 1. Don't be afraid of them
 2. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome
 3. Fight for your brothers, sons, daughters, wives and homes.
 4. Believe that our God will fight for us.

God's work, done in God's way never lacks for God's supply. As soon as they begin to mobilize to protect from attack, the enemy withdraws. Verse 15...

Have you come to that place in your own life where you stop asking God to give you a safe life, and make you a dangerous follower of Jesus Christ?

Erwin McManus, "Seizing Your Divine Moment," Preaching Today, Issue 252

You will never be more dangerous than in prayer. Whose back are you covering? What low point of the wall is yours? What ministry do you do battle for? We are not a crop of dwarfs!

Word Application Questions:

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

1. As sort of pre-cursor to the study- read the quote above from Shane Hipps. If applicable to your group ask this question: **What is the impact of the internet and technological gadgetry on your spiritual life? Does it move you towards wisdom and Christ likeness? Explain.**
2. **Read carefully as a group through Nehemiah 4:8-23. What are the things that stand out to you from the text?**
3. **Consider vs. 11-12. The Jews passed on what the enemy had said and became accomplices in planting thoughts of fear in people's minds. Are you discerning in what we pass on to others? Do your words plant fear or hope in the minds of others?**
4. **What are you afraid of?**
5. **Who or what are the enemies that we are called to fight today? What are our weapons in the battle?**
6. **What best reflects your prayer life: asking God for safety from danger; or asking God to make you dangerous to the enemy? (Defensive or offensive).**

VISION-CASTING: (15 minutes)