

# Dealing with Distractions

Nehemiah 6:1-14

Regardless of our role or position in life, regardless of whatever goal or target we are aiming at, there will be countless “shiny things” vying for our attention. We have to ask the question, “Is this an opportunity to explore or a distraction to ignore?” We need wisdom to make the right choices. *We cannot allow distractions to keep us from pursuing God’s plan and purpose for our lives.*

In Nehemiah 6:1-14, Nehemiah is focused on completing the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. His enemies use three different distractions to try to deter him from finishing the project.

## **Distraction #1: Opportunities (1-4)**

In any great work of God, leaders are strategic. To stop the work, the enemies of Israel try to stop Nehemiah. Satan will try to cause the leader to fall, lose credibility, or disappear altogether.

The distraction comes at a time when the project is almost complete (1). The only thing left is to hang the doors in the gates.

Sanballat and Gesham invite Nehemiah to a “peace conference” in the plain of Ono (almost 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem) (2). Their hidden agenda was to get rid of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah’s enemies were relentless and persistent. They mocked him at the beginning of the project (2:19), threatened violence in the middle of the project (4:1-2, 7-8), and plotted against him at the end of the project (6:2).

Nehemiah politely refused and kept focused on the task at hand (3-4).

- ❖ Maintaining a focused priority helps you know what to say “Yes” to and what to say “No” to. Keep in mind what God has called you to do.

## **Distraction #2: Criticism (5-9)**

Changing tactics, Sanballat sends an “unsealed letter” (5) filled with rumor and inuendo (6-7). It was actually an old complaint (2:19).

Sanballat and Gesham’s true motive comes to light—frighten the workers into quitting (9).

Nehemiah responds with an immediate denial (8) and a quick prayer (9).

- ❖ We need wisdom to know when to confront rumors, when to ignore them, and when to keep working.

## **Distraction #3: Fear (10-14)**

Since the overt approach hasn’t worked, Nehemiah’s enemies now try a more subtle approach of fear and intimidation (10).

The scare tactic tries to get Nehemiah to compromise and violate God’s Law (11). Only priests could enter the temple (Numbers 3:10). Nehemiah would disqualify himself if he followed this advice.

Nehemiah saw through the façade and understood their motives (12-13).

- ❖ Don’t allow fear of the unknown to cause you to compromise and miss out on what God wants to do through you.

Nehemiah commits the matter to God (14).

- ❖ Leave your critics and enemies in God’s hands. Don’t take the matter into your own hands.