

SERMON SERIES COMPANION STUDIES  
FOR SMALL GROUPS



# LET'S REBUILD!

A SERIES FROM THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

REBUILDING LIFE, CHURCH, AND COMMUNITY

## STUDY 4

# When Opposition Comes

SERMON TEXT: NEHEMIAH 2:19-20; 4:1-23

COMPANION STUDY TEXT: ROMANS 12:14-21; 1 PETER 5:8-11

## Getting Started

If you haven't done so already, share this PDF, or the link to this study, with other members of your group.

After greeting one another, take a minute or two of silence together and offer an opening prayer. If you don't all know one another already, invite each group member to share their name.

## Opening Question

When is it easiest to love people who hurt you? When is it especially hard?

## Purpose of This Week's Study

To build steadfastness and courage in our small group communities as we face challenges from within and without.

### INTRODUCTION TO THIS WEEK'S STUDY

This week's sermon focused on the opposition Nehemiah faced in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and on how he responded to that opposition both with prayer to God and practical changes to his approach, which involved building with one hand and holding a weapon in the other. Like Nehemiah, both trust and readiness should be essential tools for us as Christians.

In this study, we'll be looking at two New Testament passages that move the church toward both practical readiness and hope. As we work on building strength to face our challenges, we will see that our approach, like Nehemiah's, should be rooted in both action and in trust.

## Scripture Reading

Invite two people from your group to read the following passages from Romans 12 and 1 Peter 5 aloud:

### ROMANS 12:14-21 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### 1 PETER 5:8-11 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

<sup>10</sup> And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. <sup>11</sup> To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

## For Reflection & Discussion

1. In the passage from Romans, Paul provides a series of simple and unambiguous instructions that are nonetheless profoundly difficult to carry out. What is your initial reaction to these instructions? If they weren't part of Scripture, would you consider them good advice? How easy do you think it is for you to do what Paul is asking here?
2. Paul's instructions focus on how we are to relate to one another and to people outside the church. How might you benefit from following Paul's instructions in verses 14 through 16? How would the people in your life benefit? Why do you think Paul tells us to rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn? How are his instructions related to each other? (You might, for example, mention that mourning and rejoicing anchors us to the experiences of those around us, strengthens community, and helps us to follow Paul's next instruction: living in harmony with one another.)

3. Paul focuses on avoiding evil in verses 17 through 21. Why is it so important not to repay evil with evil (you may want to look at verse 21)? Why do you think kindness and generosity is likened to heaping burning coals on your enemy here? What are practical ways we can avoid being overcome by evil, and instead overcome evil with good?
4. What is one way you have noticed your adversary, the devil, seeking to devour you or those around you in the present season? In what ways have you noticed your adversary, the devil at work in the world more broadly in recent times?
5. What are some practical ways of being alert and of sober mind, as Peter instructs? Why is alertness important? What, according to Peter, strengthens our ability to resist and stand firm in our faith? How do you feel about your own hope and faith after reading this passage?

## For Prayer Ministry

Begin this week's prayer time by sitting quietly before God together, opening the time with the prayer below. Then spend two full minutes waiting quietly and listening (you might consider having someone set a timer on their phone as you wait):

- *Lord, fill our hearts as we wait on you in this time. Comfort us with your peace and fill us with your wisdom and clarity. Your strength is made perfect in our weakness; please reveal to us where we need your strength the most as we resist evil in the world, and in our own lives.*

After a time of waiting, divide into groups of 3 or 4, or if your group is small, stay together in one group. Share what God has revealed to you during your time of waiting on him, including any fears or misgivings you may have about overcoming evil with good and standing firm in your faith. Close by taking some time praying over one another and speaking blessing over one another.

## For Further Reflection & Action Outside of Group

- Pick at least one member of your group, more if you feel so led, and pray for them and their concerns every day this week. Next week, ask them where they saw God moving in their lives, and praise God for those blessings.
- Start each day this week by reading 1 Peter 5:8-11 aloud; conclude each day by reading Romans 12:14-21 aloud. Talk with God about your successes each day, as well as about where you feel you could have done better. Thank him and praise him for the times during your day when you sensed Him moving.