

Lead Through Opposition

Free to Build

Nehemiah 4:1-9

When it comes to the book of Nehemiah, one of the things we're looking at is leadership. We're talking about leadership principles through the book of Nehemiah, and if there is one group of people who knows leadership, it's those who are in the military. The military does leadership so well because decisions often mean life and death. So one of the things I really love to do is listen to or read about leaders from the military. One of my favorite speeches was given at the University of Texas. It was by Admiral William McRaven. He gave this commencement speech to the students there, and he started out by saying, "If you want to change the world, it starts with making your bed." It's kind of a very off thing. Here is this Navy Seal, who is up giving a speech to this group of graduating seniors, telling them if you want to change the world, start by making your bed. As he began to talk through this speech, he began to go through all of the training that Navy Seals go through. It is a crazy training process that Navy Seals go through. He said the very first thing is to get your bed right. You make sure you make your bed and make it perfect. The reason is because when you leave your room, often you failed at whatever the task was for the day. These tasks were very hard and you failed over and over again, but as you came back to your room, you could celebrate one victory. The victory was that you made your bed. You got to get in a made bed. The next morning, you would get a victory right off the bat; make your bed. He says if you will take care of the small things in leadership, then the big things will take care of themselves. He went through all of these different principles in training as a Navy Seal, and he gave these stories. One of the stories was how at midnight they would have to swim this great distance through the ocean, and it was a spot that was notorious for sharks. The leaders would go through all the various sharks that live there, all the ways

that a shark could eat you, and then they would throw the guys in and they had to swim this great link in shark-infested water. They would tell them that if a shark comes to attack you, do not swim away, turn around, and attack it. If a shark comes to bite you, punch it in the snout. You stand your ground. I'm thinking I could not imagine being thrown in the ocean and being told to punch a shark! This is heavy stuff, but as he would tell these graduating seniors this news, then he would apply it to their lives. He would say when it comes to life you've got to watch out for the sharks. Everywhere you swim in life, there are going to be sharks, so pay attention. He did this in all the training, all that he learned, all that he went through, he would then take a principle and give it to the people in the audience where they could take and live it in their life.

That is sort of what we've been doing in Nehemiah. We've been taking the story of Nehemiah and what these people are going through, and we've been taking it and saying because of this, here's what it means for you in your practical life; here's what your leadership needs to look like. Some of you are still saying I'm not a leader. We've covered that. Everybody is a leader because leader is influence. So if you have any influence, that means over yourself; so you're leading yourself, you're leading others, you're leading kids, grandkids, a company, or whatever it looks like, you lead in some capacity. So, how do we lead? We want to lead well. As we looked at these chapters in Route 66, we did the whole book of Nehemiah in one setting. We looked at chapters 4, 5, and 6, and we said this about those; here's the big principle that we're going to overview before we dive in. It says that biblical leaders do not let opposition from without, or problems from within, stop the work of God. So that's what we're going to talk about during this session this morning. We're going to talk about opposition is going to come, and Nehemiah led through opposition. There was opposition from outsiders, and there were problems from insiders, but both of those things he handled in a way that didn't stop the work of God. He kept it going, so that's what we're going to try to get to this morning. Under this one heading, we're going to have six different takeaways that you can take and apply to your leadership because we want to be biblical leaders, because we have a kingdom to build, the Kingdom of Christ. It

starts by influencing one person at a time. If you have your bibles, turn to Nehemiah chapter 4 and we will begin to read in verse 1.

Scripture

“ Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?” Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!” Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders. So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.”

(Prayer)

Father God, I pray that You help us to understand that we also are building the Kingdom of Christ in enemy territory. There will be opposition. There will be problems from amongst our own people that we're trying to lead. So help us as biblical leaders to not let opposition and problems stop us from the great work that You have called us to. We pray this in Jesus good name, amen.

So we see right off the bat that Nehemiah has this vision from God to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem because God wants His presence to be, again, in the place of Jerusalem. So we have the temple that is built where God is going to dwell, but God is going to mark out with the wall the presence of His people. They needed a wall for protection because at that time, you had to have a wall to guard your city. Militaries were coming to take you over, so a wall was very important for protection in the biblical days. Here we have Nehemiah who is going to try to accomplish this task, and right off the bat as they begin to build, the first thing that happens from these other political power, these other kingdoms, other nations, they don't bring military pressure right off the bat; the first thing is they just start laughing at them. What often happens with you when it comes to trying to influence someone into the kingdom or towards the glory of God, it often come with a laugh in your ear. "Ha, ha, ha; who are you? Who are you to influence anybody? You know what you've done. They've seen the way you lived. They know where you grew up. They know the things...who are you? You can't do that. You're not strong enough. You don't know enough. You're not educated enough. You're not walking good enough. How dare you try to go and do what God has called you to do?" That's exactly what happens with Nehemiah and the people. You have Sanballat and Tobiah, these two powerful men, who just laugh. *Yeah Nehemiah! You're going to try to build a wall around Jerusalem...really? Uh, you guys are weak! You're feeble; you can't do it! You all don't have enough manpower. There's no way this is going to happen! Just in case you haven't noticed, just look at all the stones. They're rubble, they're spent out, and if you notice, they're charred, or they were burned. Our kids drew graffiti on your stones. They're worthless! You can't pick them up, and if you did happen to get this wall up, you're going to be such a poor builder that if a fox jumps on top of it, it's probably going to fall down! Like a little dog if he chases a bone, it's going to just crumble, so good luck with your wall. Ha, ha, ha...you can't do it.* It is just laughing, it is jeering; they are trying to get the people to be discouraged. The opposition is trying to get the people to think maybe they are right; maybe we can't do what God is calling us to do.

So, what is the reaction? We're going to see what biblical leaders do from this little portion of the text. Biblical leaders both pray and do, both of those things. Biblical leaders pray and do. When Nehemiah gets these accusations, these laughs where they're making fun of them, notice he doesn't start yelling back at them. He doesn't go to Twitter and start ranting about them. He doesn't attack them. He doesn't yell at them. We are very good as leaders doing that, we yell at each other. As people, we yell at each other. When somebody laughs at us, we swell up and we yell back. Nehemiah doesn't do that. He doesn't attack them. He doesn't go to them; instead, he goes right to God. You have these enemies attacking Nehemiah and the Jews, and Nehemiah just kneels and begins to pray to his God. *God, do You hear what they're saying? Do you hear them saying we can't do this, in other words that You can't do this, that You are not strong enough to complete what You've done? God, You deal with them!* He takes these insults and goes to God. He doesn't revile back; he goes to God, just like our Lord and Savior did when He was being spit on. He doesn't revile back, he trusts his heavenly Father. That's what we must do. As biblical leaders, we can't revile back. We can't get into shouting matches; we must first go to God in prayer for whatever situation, whatever we're trying to move the needle in, we go to God first.

So they have this opposition that's coming...they're going to try to kill us; how do we protect ourselves? I love what Nehemiah says in verse 9, "And we prayed to our God and set up a guard to protect us..." It's both of those. Nehemiah says ok God You've got to protect us. We can't protect ourselves. I'm praying to You for protection, and then he gets up and starts enlisting guards to set to protect the city. He does both of those things. He prays to God and he makes provision for protection. That's what biblical leaders do; they pray and they do.

We can often fall in two different ditches. The first ditch is we can over spiritualize things, and as biblical leaders, we say all we've got to do is pray. We're just going to pray, let go and let God, and He's got it all. We're just going to pray and not do anything, and He is going to take care of everything. That's not what Nehemiah did. Nehemiah didn't just pray. No, he got to work. He set up guards. He made provisions for God to answer

those prayers. The other ditch is to forget prayer and just set up guards. We're in trouble so we've got to have a fleshly response; we've got to get to work and take care of ourselves. We've got to pick ourselves up by our bootstraps. God helps those who help themselves. That's the other ditch. We're not even going to go to prayer, we're just going to fix this ourselves, and hopefully God will show up. Those are both equally wrong responses when it comes to God. We don't just pray, we don't just do, but we pray and we do. See, the doing means we have faith in the prayer we just prayed. Nehemiah is praying for protection, and in trusting that God is going to protect them, he sets up guards knowing that God is going to protect the city through the guards he puts up. It's not just going to be some magical thing that happens. No, God is going to use ordinary means to do supernatural work. Nehemiah knows this connection. He's praying and he's doing.

Some of us when it comes to building the Kingdom of Christ, we forget that we're supposed to pray and do. We have a lost friend or neighbor, and we say we are going to pray for them. We just keep praying for them and praying for them. That's good, but it's not enough. You have to pray for your lost neighbor and you go knock on their door. You've got to pray for your lost neighbor, and then actually go share the gospel with them. It is praying and doing that God is going to answer that prayer. Some of you have an estranged relationship with a friend, a family member, or a co-worker, so you're praying God changes their heart. What you need to do is pray that, then go to them and work reconciliation out. You need to go to them and find out what's in between you and how you can be a minister of reconciliation in that relationship. Some of you are saying you want to grow. God help me to grow! Well, pray that, but then get around some people and start doing discipleship. Start growing with some people in your life. Some of you are saying God, give me wisdom, but then you aren't reading your Bible. It's pray for wisdom, but open the Word and read, because through the Word, God is going to answer the prayer to give you wisdom. See, it's both those things! We don't just do in the flesh, we don't just prayer and over spiritualize and say we don't have a part in this; no, what Nehemiah says is we prayed and we set up guards because through the guards, God is going to answer our prayer. See, what Nehemiah did is

his faith led him to action. If we're going to be biblical leaders, our faith has to lead us to action. We pray and we also do.

The second thing we see is biblical leaders motivate with a grand vision of God. Notice what it says in verse 10-14. It says, *"In Judah it was said, 'The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.' And our enemies said, 'They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.' At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, 'You must return to us.' So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, 'Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.'"* What is Nehemiah doing? The people are discouraged, so Nehemiah motivated them with a grand vision of God. They're discouraged because they hear the rumors that the powers to be, the nations around them are about to come and take over. They're coming with swords and armies, and they're coming under attack, so all of a sudden, it's very scary to be building the wall. Not only that, but they also say there's just too much rubble. There's too much to do. We're too weak. We can't do it. It's overbearing. So they were afraid of the opponents around them. They were overwhelmed by the work. And check this out; the people around them who hadn't participated in the wall are saying ten times, *Why don't you just come back home? Grandma is calling and saying I've got dinner on the table. I heard things aren't going well in Jerusalem. Why don't you come home? We'll just cook a meal and do our own thing. Why don't you just come back home to your house and your bed? It will be a whole lot safer there.* There is all this reason why the people were about to quit...it's too scary, it's too hard, Mamma is saying come back home...what are we going to do?

So Nehemiah steps up, and this is what biblical leaders must do. First of all, you've got to know your people. You don't just have a mission. You don't just have something you're doing. You have people that are

following, maybe they are kids, your employees, or your discipleship group, or whoever it is who are following you that you're influencing. You've got to know there is a task we're going for: How are my people doing? Nehemiah had one ear on his people, and he had one eye on the task. He was looking both at his people and on the task. He realized his people couldn't control this task. They can't complete it because there are some problems. They need some encouragement. So how does Nehemiah encourage them? I love what he says: Don't be afraid. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome. Go fight. I love that! Here is how Nehemiah motivated the people...remember the Lord. I know you're scared. I know it's hard. I know you want to go home, but remember the Lord. You're looking at only what we have to do. You're looking only at the task, and what you need to remember is the Lord.

The disciples were notorious for this! They would see Jesus feed five thousand people with a little boy's lunchbox. He would feed four thousand people with about the same amount of food. Then the disciples would be in a boat looking for bread, and say, *man, we're out of bread! I don't know what we're going to do. We're just probably going to die.* Jesus would say, *remember the bread! Remember what just happened. Have you forgotten the Lord is with you! If you need bread, how about you just ask Me because I'm pretty good at making bread.* They constantly forgot who the Lord is, and the Lord was there!

That was the people of Israel, and those rocks were too heavy. I'm pretty sure that God is good at picking up rocks. He's got it. The God who can move mountains and part waters can help you lift some rocks and build this wall He has called you to build. The people weren't remembering God, and notice what Nehemiah says. He says remember the Lord; He's great, and He is awesome. I love that description of God! I use awesome a lot. It's one of those words that I just say a lot, and I probably shouldn't because when you use awesome a lot, it doesn't do justice to what the word means. Really, God is someone who can be spoken of as awesome. You say man, that pizza was awesome! It really wasn't. It might have been ok, or good, but it wasn't awesome. Awesome is like this awe struck vision of who God is! He is awesome, and He is great! He truly is what that word

is trying to describe. He's so above us and so magnificent. Nehemiah is trying to get the people to remember all those stories they've heard, all those experiences they've had with God, remember not just the task, but remember who you're doing the task for. As we are sharing the gospel and trying to do good, we're being salt and light in our communities, as we're trying to influence our neighbors and co-workers for the gospel, we can get so focused on the task that we realize it's too hard. We can't do it. We can't build the church. We can't build the kingdom. There are just not enough of us and there's so much darkness; we don't have enough light. What we need to be reminded of is we serve God, and He's great and He is awesome. We need to remember that He is light, He is creator, He is redeemer, He is sustainer, and as we are doing the task, it's Him that said all authority in Heaven and earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples. I've got this and I'll be with you till the end of the age. Don't forget that. That's a reason He put that at the end. I'll be with you till the end of the age; He's saying don't forget! Remember Me. I'm great and awesome. When you get frustrated, look at Me, think about Me; don't just look at the task, look at the King who gave you the task. Then get back to work.

Nehemiah deals with their discouragement by giving them a vision of who God is...remember. Some of you need to be reminded of that this morning. You are hearing that whisper in your ear that you can't do it. You're trying, but it's just hard. It's just frustrating thinking why don't I just check out and live my life and not influence anybody, and that would be easier. That's true; it would be easier. No opposition, you can just go home and live your life and everything would be great. But you would be forgetting something...that the Lord is great and awesome. Remember the Lord and get back to work is what Nehemiah would tell us.

Number three is that biblical leaders build in enemy territory. They build in enemy territory. If you have your bibles opened, you can look at verses 15-23. We see there is opposition. There are armies coming after them, and Nehemiah said those who carry burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. I love this idea! They're building the wall and they've got one hand

on a shovel and one hand on a sword. They are building in enemy territory, and they have to be aware of that because as they build, there is opposition coming. In other words, Nehemiah is saying be alert, this is not friendly territory. There are people who will come and try to javelin you. There are people who are going to try to kill you, so as you're doing the work, keep one hand on your sword because things might be a little messy. Those who are watching us build this place where God is going to dwell do not like it at all. They see it as a declaration of war, and they're going to come after us so don't turn your back. Have one hand on the shovel and one hand on the sword.

We did a little Hike through the Bible a couple of weeks ago, and we took the second through fifth graders. We are hiking this mountain...well, LBL, it's not really a mountain; it's more like a hill. Anyway, we're hiking and I love hiking. I'm hiking by Nick Dempsey, and we're talking about great hikes because we've both done some hikes and we want to do some really great hikes. We're talking through various hikes all around America and the world, and he says I've got a buddy who hiked through Alaska. He said it was awesome, but it was also a little scary. He said when my buddy got to the trail in Alaska there was a game warden who met him there. The game warden said I've just got one question for you. Do you have a gun? His buddy said yeah, I've got a gun. The game warden said I've got a second question for you. How big is your gun? You aren't going on this trail unless you have a big gun, because on this trail there are these things called grizzly bears. Grizzly bears will assume you are a snack walking through the woods, so if you want to walk through the woods in Alaska, you not only need a gun you need a big gun because things are coming after you.

That's what Nehemiah is trying to get people to see. As we build this, people are coming after you. Things are coming after you. The cosmos, the principalities to be are coming after you, so you had better get your sword and your shovel at the same time. I think as we live in the New Testament church, we have to realize that we build the Kingdom of Christ in enemy territory. Our enemy is not flesh and blood, it's not those people who disagree with us or scream at us. That's not the enemy; it's the powers to be, the prince of power. We build the kingdom with a lion on the loose.

There is a lion who is called Satan who is prowling to seek and devour your life. So if you pick up a shovel, you better also have a sword because there is a lion who if you touch the shovel, he knows your name and he's coming after you. He doesn't want the Kingdom of Christ to be built. He doesn't want you to influence your neighbors. He doesn't want you to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus. He doesn't want you to look like Christ, and he's going to throw everything he can at you, so be alert. Have one eye open. We're in the last days. Here's what the New Testament would say, so you better be alert, you better be watching, and you better have your shovel and go to work building the Kingdom of Christ, proclaiming the gospel, but you better do it with a sword at your side. If you've ever been on a mission trip with Bro Ricky, you've done an Ephesians 6 Bible study. Every mission I've ever been on with Bro Ricky, he's done an Ephesians 6 Bible study because what he knows is we're getting ready to go down the Amazon River or wherever we're going in Nicaragua, or wherever we're traveling to be, we are going to proclaim the gospel and Satan does not like that, so what we need is to have the full armor of God. He tells us that. I can't remember how many times I got out of my hammock and put on the whole armor of God, knowing that I've got to have my sword. I've got to have the Word of God in my heart. I've got to be alert. I've got to have my eyes open because there's a lion coming for me. But then I go home, I rise from my bed, and I walk out of my house not even thinking about the spiritual war that's happening all around me. I'm not alert, I'm just wandering around because I believe the lion is alive and well in the Amazon but he's not alive and well in Dexter. Somehow, he is sleeping here, and that's not the truth. The lion is just as much wanting to eat your lunch here as he is anywhere you go. So what's our principle from Nehemiah? We are building in enemy territory. So if you're going to grab a shovel, you better grab a sword too, you better hide the word of God in your heart, and you better leave with that full armor of God because the enemy is coming for you because we build in enemy territory.

Number four is that we see biblical leaders lead from conviction and integrity, not power and privilege. I love Nehemiah as a leader, and we see some of his leadership really exemplified in chapter 5:1-19. We can't read

it all, but I want to walk through what's happening in this situation. So they're trying to do the work of God. They're trying to designate the place where God's people are going to dwell in Jerusalem. What we have is this cry comes out. Here's what it says in verse 1, "Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers." Mommas and wives aren't happy. You had better pay attention. Something is going on here. What's happening? We have oppression that's going on. You have some rulers and leaders who are using the people to build their resources up, not caring about that their brothers and sisters are starving. They're actually breaking God's law in doing it. Nehemiah says in verse 6, "I was very angry when I heard their outcry...You are exacting interest, each from his brother...We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!" these Jewish brothers and sisters have come back from Babylon, they were slaves, now their free and as they're coming back home, they don't have enough money to pay the king's taxes, so you are charging them an exorbitant interest so that you're getting richer and richer, and they are actually starving to death. They are actually becoming your slaves! What happened in Babylon is now happening in Jerusalem. He says that's actually against the laws of God. God had actually told the Jewish people as their nation what they would do is not exact interest from each other. That was part of the law of God and they're breaking the law of God to build their own power and privilege so that they could have stuff even though their brothers and sisters were starving. They were breaking God's law. They were breaking God's heart, and Nehemiah, with conviction, calls it out. This was dangerous. Think about it. You're Nehemiah, you're the leader of this group of people, and you see a problem. The problem lies with all the people in power are doing something against the people that are oppressed. You realize that if I side with the people who are oppressed, there's a good chance I will lose all my power. I'm going to get kicked out if I do what's right. Because the people have power make decisions, they determine whether or not I stay in power or not, so Nehemiah could have easily just overlooked what was going on. He could overlook the fact that these people were breaking the laws of God and hurting their own neighbors. He could just overlook it. This isn't my

problem. I'm just not going to deal with this. No, what does he do? In conviction, he knows what's right and he speaks up against what's wrong, at the cost of his leadership, at the cost of his life, probably, he speaks truth to power. What happens? They repent. They repent. The people of God who were mistreating their own brothers and sisters repent. They realize, yes, we are sinning. We repent. They have this repentance, and decide to be gracious to their brothers and their sisters. We have Nehemiah, with conviction, doing what's right, not knowing what's going to happen; he just does what's right and true, and God works out the details.

But he's not just a man of conviction; he's a man of integrity. If you look at the next portion of that chapter, we see that Nehemiah tells his own story. He says hey, when I was a governor under Artaxerxes, there was this little provision made that governors could tax the people to pay for extravagant meals for all of his people. Nehemiah says I never did that. I never did it one time. All of the other governors were doing it. They were taxing the people and living in luxury; I did not do that because I'm a man of integrity. I'm here to serve the people, not to make money off the people, not so I can live in luxury when they are starving to death. So I never took this tax that was allotted to me. No, I am a man of integrity and conviction, and I here to serve the people that I'm leading. That's what biblical leaders do. They lead with conviction and integrity. That's what the church must be. We're in a crisis of leadership. Leaders who we can say have conviction and integrity are few and far between. As the church, we need to be raising up leaders who have conviction and integrity so we can say to that woman or that man, follow them. That's what I want my kids to be like. That's what we need in the church, to be raising up leaders who have conviction and integrity, who do what's right, even when it might cost them. In the moments, even in the secret, they do what's right. They do what's required because they fear God more than they fear man. That was Nehemiah, a man of conviction and integrity.

Number five, we see that biblical leaders stay focused on the great work. What we see in chapter 6 is Sanballat and Tobiah go to Nehemiah and say we need you to come off the wall. We're want to discuss this matter with you about this whole wall thing, so come down, and let's talk about it. I

love what Nehemiah says. He says but they intended to do me harm, then he says I'm doing a great work and I cannot come down. These leaders, these people in power are going to Nehemiah and saying come down here and let's talk about this. Nehemiah says I can't talk about this because I'm doing a great work. See, biblical leaders know what's important. They know what to stay focused on, and they keep focused on the right things. Nehemiah could have easily come down off the wall, tried to make an appeasement with the nations around him, he would have gotten distracted, probably harmed, and the wall probably wouldn't have gotten built in Jerusalem. Nehemiah says no, God's given me a task, I know what it is, and I'm staying on this wall. I have a great work that God is calling me to do. For us, as men and women in leadership, we have to know what God has called us to. What are the one or two things He has really put on your heart that He says I need you to do this for the sake of the Kingdom? Do those things and don't get distracted by everything else.

When Steve Jobs took back over Apple in the 90's, do you know what he said? He said no to almost every single good idea that was ever brought to me. All these people were bringing these really, really good ideas, and I would say no, we're not doing that. No, we're not doing that. No, no, no, no, I said no to almost every single good idea I ever saw because I was waiting to say yes to the one or two great ideas. I think Apple has done pretty good as a company because Steve Jobs was able to say I'm not getting in the weeds of the good, I'm only waiting for the great.

Nehemiah knew what was great in his life. He knew what God was calling him to. We, as people, we typically say yes to everything. We get involved in everything and we forget, maybe it is moms and dads, we're raising our kids in the way of the Lord, not in everything else, and we can forget that's the focus. Nehemiah said I'm doing something great; I can't get entangled with all the other stuff. I think as a biblical leader, you need to understand what it is that God has really called you to do. What will be your contribution to the Kingdom of Christ? I'm going to stay focused on that. I'm going to do that and not get distracted by the hundred different things that everybody else wants me to do. I'm going to stay on the wall and do

the one thing that God has called me to do. Biblical leaders stay focused on the great work.

Lastly, biblical leaders lead for God's sake. I love at the end of chapter 6 in verse 15-16, it says, "So the wall was finished...And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God." So the story starts out feeble Jews who can't even pick up their own stones, now there's a wall built in fifty-two days, and the nations are suddenly losing confidence in themselves, and they're looking at these Jews, not saying wow, they're stronger people than we thought; no, they are saying they are weak, but He is strong. God must have helped them. God must be in them. The nations around could see through the way Nehemiah led, through the way the people built that this was not something they could accomplish. This was something done with the help of God. That's what biblical leaders do. Biblical leaders lead in a way that God gets the glory. We do and move by faith, and we take on things that maybe aren't possible within our own capacity, but we step out on faith and we allow God to do things through us that when our family looks back, when the people around us look back, they see there is no way he or she could have accomplished that. That must be the hand of God. God must have been doing something there. So God gets the glory. The nations praise the name of God through the good leadership of Nehemiah and through the people building the wall.

The truth is these people and Nehemiah are not just building a wall around Jerusalem, they are actually declaring war, and all the nations around them knew it. What they are saying is there is a spot right here where God's presence is going to dwell. There is a kingdom that is bigger than Persia, bigger than Babylon, and it is the kingdom of our God. One of the greatest lines in these three chapters that I didn't read is verse 7 of chapter 6. There are these accusations that Sanballat is writing about Nehemiah. He says Nehemiah, you're trying to rebel, you're trying to become a king, you're trying to do all this, and then he says in your prophecies, there is this little prophecy that says there is a king in Judah. It's just a passing by detail in the story. I just want to remind us of that little line, because it

wasn't Nehemiah. He's not the king, he's declaring to be a king, but the truth of the prophecy is real. There is a king in Judah, and we know His name. That king in Judah is Jesus of Nazareth and He is the Christ. He is the Anointed One. He is the King. As we build the Kingdom of Christ, as we share the gospel, as we build the temple, which is now the church, people who have the Holy Spirit within us, as we go and influence others, we are saying to the principalities in the air that this kingdom is going to become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. We are declaring war as we build. So as we pick up our shovel, we also need to pick up our sword because when we touch the shovel, when we go to work influencing people for the sake of Christ, the principalities know what we're saying. We're saying your kingdom is ending and there's a kingdom coming and the kingdom coming is the one that is going to last forever. You're doomed, so we declare war, so we have to have our shovels, but we also have to have our swords.

I think it is true that making your bed can help you change the world, but I don't think making your bed actually changes the world. I think instead probably with those made beds, if you want to change the world it is what you do next. It is as you get beside your bed on your knees, and with folded hands on your bed, you cry out to God, "Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven." You cry out that war cry that today I'm going to influence people for the sake of Christ, and I'm going to see that Jesus builds the Kingdom of Christ through me everywhere I go. You make that declaration, that war cry, on that made bed of yours; you say this is how the world gets changed. But you can't just pray about it. Then you get up, grab your shovel, you walk out the door, and you go to work, not just doing, no, doing and praying; but not just praying, praying and doing. That's how we build the Kingdom of Christ.