

Text: Nehemiah 4:

Title: "We Quit!"

Introduction: In January, I had a chance to go down to Florida with my family and visit my Dad and my oldest brother and his kids. While there I had the opportunity to run a half-marathon at Disney World. Now, most of you know what this winter has been like here in Wisconsin so you know that it was great to get down to Florida and wear some shorts and t-shirts.

The problem was this: It was warm in Florida. The morning I ran the half the temperature was over 65 degrees with heavy humidity ... by 3 am! I didn't run until 6 am. I don't want to make excuses, but it was a little different running there than it was training up here in the ice and snow. By mile 4 I had sweat dripping off my cap and I realized that I had been running too fast for the weather. My feet started hurting because of an injury and ... I was hurting! When I got to mile 6 or 7 and I realized I was only half way to the finish line, I was more than a little discouraged. I was exhausted from what I'd already done and was not sure if I could finish the run. My brain was trying to convince me to quit.

Well, this morning we continue to attack the Giants in our lives that hinder us from being everything that God wants us to be and experiencing everything that God wants us to experience right now. Last week we talked about how the Giant of FEAR keeps us from the joy in this life that Jesus promised. We used the story of the Hebrew people and the Promised Land to help us talk about the 5 things that fear does to us and then we talked about the 5 Biblical things that we can do back to fear.

If you missed it, please listen to the message and follow along with the notes at www.bmzchurch.org. Check under the 'ministry' tab.

Today we get to go after another Giant. This Giant is the kind of Giant that makes you want to quit! It's the kind of Giant that makes you feel like you've been wasting your time ... even if you've been doing something good. It's the kind of Giant that can take us down with a just a couple of unkind words. It's the Giant of DISCOURAGEMENT!

To help us get a better understanding of how DISCOURAGEMENT affects us and what we can do about it, we are going back to the Old Testament. Back in about 606 BC the Babylonian Empire started their invasion of the Promised Land that we talked about last week.

During that time the Babylonians would not only take over the land, but their tactic for keeping the land was to take the Hebrew people and move them to different parts of their Empire and put them to work. Examples of people in our Bible who were in 'exile' by the Babylonian Empire would be: Daniel (lion's den), Shadrach, Micshak and Abendigo (fiery furnace). These four men had been moved out of Israel into another part of the Babylonian Empire.

In 587 BC, the Babylonian Empire destroyed the city of Jerusalem, including the Temple. Destroyed, as in, essentially burned to the ground ... a pile of rubble.

In 539 BC, the Persians defeated the Babylonians. Once this happened the Persians told the Hebrew people that they could return to their homeland. The first

Hebrews went back in 538 BC and started rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. But, without a wall around the city, the Hebrew people had no protection from their neighbors! See their neighbors knew that if the Hebrew people got Jerusalem built again, they could grow into a powerful force again.

So, the Hebrew people needed a wall built around their city. The assignment for that job went to a man named Nehemiah. Nehemiah was very organized and smart. He also trusted God. He encouraged the people who were coming back into Jerusalem from wherever in the Babylonian Empire they had been, to start building the wall up near their house or business. Guess what? The neighbors didn't like it! That's pretty close to where we pick up our story for today.

I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Bible Verses for today. On the other you will see room for notes; again, including an outline and some fill in the blanks. My hope is that you will hear something today you will be able to use the next time you feel the Giant of Discouragement crashing into your life.

Right before our Scripture starts in Nehemiah 4, the neighboring enemies of the Hebrews have started mocking the Jews efforts at rebuilding their wall. "Hey, they are using the old rubble to build their walls ... they are just going to fall down again!" Our reading starts with Nehemiah's reply to their insults:

READ NEHEMIAH 4:4-13 NOW AND PRAY!

Okay, so we can see that the Jewish people there in Jerusalem are working on becoming discouraged. What I want us to see in these verses is what makes us vulnerable to discouragement. To get to discouragement, we recognize that there are four things that build upon each other. We need to recognize these and stop them! Here they are:

- I. Piling On Discouragement
 - A. Discouragement Factor #1 is **FATIGUE**
 1. One of Vince Lombardi's quotes was: "Fatigue makes cowards of us all."
 2. In Verse 10 we find out "that the workers were becoming tired."
 - a. We know that the Jewish people finished the wall in 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15).
 - b. We also know that the wall was half as tall as they wanted it, so we figure they had been working somewhere in the ballpark of a month. A month of non-stop building of the wall around Jerusalem. No days off ... no time to get away with the family and relax.
 3. Have you ever experienced this? Have you ever realized that you are just plain tired? When we get to our limits it's hard to have the courage to do the next thing on our list.

- a. Worked 12 hour shifts or tax season for accountants or just busy times when things don't slow down = we get tired.
 - b. Most of us know our limits ... and we are all different. There is that point, with the combination of time limits, stress and how we've exerted ourselves, that we realize we've had it.
 - c. We become irritable, cranky, slower and not as productive.
4. So, again, the 1st thing we have to be aware of to prevent DISCOURAGEMENT is our level of FATIGUE.
- B. Discouragement Factor #2 is: **FRUSTRATION**
- 1. Also in Verse 10 we find that the workers on the wall are struggling with all the rubble.
 - a. Remember the previous wall was torn down by the Babylonians around 40-50 years earlier. They tore it to the ground.
 - b. Now, picture this, the Jewish people or Hebrews who had returned from being in exile somewhere in the Babylonian Empire are trying to work around the piles of stone pieces left from the last wall.
 - c. So, first they have to clear the area of the rubble, just so they can build the foundation of the wall, then build and continue to trip over all those piles.
 - d. Moving these mounds of debris could easily cause mounds of FRUSTRATION!
 - 2. Have you ever worked on a project that seemed simple and mundane and you looked back at it over days or weeks and wondered if you had accomplished anything?
 - 3. They were half-way done with the walls. They were exhausted from what they had already done and looking at the ever mounding piles, wondered if they would ever finish!
 - 4. We might say that they had burned out. Burnout comes from trying to accomplish something that is impossible or at least seems that way from where you stand.
 - 5. Building a wall through piles of rubble could lead to burnout ... and burnout leads to FRUSTRATION.
 - 6. So now we have FRUSTRATION piled on top of FATIGUE. When people feel TIRED and FRUSTRATED it is easy for them to think that they are going to FAIL!
- C. Discouragement Factor #3 is: **FAILURE**
- 1. Nehemiah 4:10 tells it all: "...the workers were becoming tired (Fatigue). There is so much rubble to be moved (Frustration) that we could never get it done by ourselves (Failure)."

2. Do you hear them? They start talking about giving up. “We’ve been at this for a month. It seemed like a good idea when we started, but we cannot do it! We’re tired. We Quit!”
 - a. Negative talk is infectious. Way more infectious than positive talk.
 - b. It doesn’t take but one person to say, “Wow, this job is hard!” ... and everyone joins in. Way fewer people join in if someone says, “Yippee! This job is easy!”
3. Hear me: FAILURE is UNIVERSAL! Everyone does it! What makes the difference is how we HANDLE Failure!
 - a. The problem comes when we listen to all the talk about how we’ve failed.
 - b. If we believe them, we quit.
 - c. “I have not accomplished anything at all” is what we say...

D. Discouragement Factor #4 is: **FEAR**

1. Sound familiar? We spent the whole worship celebration last week talking about it. But, Fear has something to do with Discouragement too.
2. Nehemiah 4:11-12 = “Our enemies are going to attack when we least expect it! Beware! There’s nothing we can do. They are going to kill us!”
3. Nothing gets us off task of doing what God wants us to do like the fear of what someone else is going to say or do.
 - a. I get a letter telling me how I have failed at ministry, and I freeze up.
 - b. The timing on that stuff is always great too! When I’m down is when I get the sand kicked in my face.
 - c. Anyone else go through that stuff?

Now that we’ve talked about all the factors that go into creating a good DISCOURAGEMENT, let’s look at ways we can respond...

Let’s start with the rest of our Scripture: **READ NEHEMIAH 4:14-23 NOW!**

II. Response to Discouragement

A. 1st Response = CRY OUT **TO GOD!**

1. Have you ever heard anyone say, “Well, there’s nothing to do now but pray.”?
 - a. Why do we wait until it’s our last option to pray?
 - b. I say we start at the top!
 - c. Nehemiah 4:4-5 = Nehemiah was starting at the top!
2. If you are feeling discouraged, CRY OUT TO GOD!
 - a. Go straight to God and tell God what’s going on.

- b. “Lord, I feel discouraged. I feel like the world is crashing down on me. I feel like I will never be able to accomplish this task. HELP!”
- 3. Read the Psalms. This is exactly what David did. He talked to God about everything ... especially when he felt discouraged!

B. 2nd Response = **CONTINUE THE WORK GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TO DO**

- 1. Why is it that our first response to discouragement is like the little kid on the playground, “I’m taking my ball and I’m going home.”?
 - a. As soon as life gets a little discouraging (takes away our courage), WE QUIT. We quit on our jobs, our churches, our marriages and our friendships... all because we, like everyone else who has ever lived on this earth, have experienced a little rubble in the way.
 - b. It’s amazing that we stop doing the only thing that can get us past our discouragement ... accomplishing what we set out to do.
 - c. If we know what God wants us to do, it’s a good idea to get focused, put on blinders, and plow ahead!
- 2. You know that our emotions are really not good advisors for what we should do. When we least feel like doing something is a good indicator that we should be doing it (work, exercise, relationships, etc.).

C. 3rd Response = **CONCENTRATE ON THE BIG PICTURE**

- 1. Now that I just told you to put blinders on, don’t miss the Big Picture! Sometimes we get so caught up in our little spot in the world that we miss what all God is trying to do.
- 2. Those poor Jewish people were so focused on the piles of stone and dirt that they forgot what they were there for.
 - a. Nehemiah 4:13-14 = He reminds them that it’s not about stacking blocks, it’s about protecting your friends, families and homes.
 - b. How many times do we get so caught up in the junk that goes on around us that we forget what God is trying to do?

D. 4th Response = **CLAIM THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOD’S PROMISES**

- 1. Nehemiah 4:14 = “Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious...”
- 2. When you get discouraged, here is my advice: Take out The Book, sit down, open it up and read until the discouragement goes away!

- E. 5th Response = **CARRY SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN**
1. "Wow Pastor Stan, this sounds a lot like last weeks ideas on how to overcome Giants!" Right, you've heard this before, but have you **DONE IT** yet??
 2. What did Nehemiah do?
 - a. He teamed the people up.
 - b. He brought them closer together, so they didn't feel like they were out there on their own.
 - c. He partnered workers with protectors (workers and guards).
 - d. He put everyone in a position to focus on someone else's needs besides their own.
 3. Discouragement usually makes us focus inward and start our own little pity parties. If we start **ENCOURAGING** someone else; party's over!
 - a. If you find you need encouragement yourself, the best thing to do is to go encourage someone else!
 - b. "But what if I don't know anybody who needs encouragement?" **WHAT!?!?**
 - c. Look around you. Plenty of people who have lost their courage to discouragement and they need encouragement to get it back.
 4. Next Sunday, plan on coming to worship and encouraging someone else! God will let you know who to talk to or sit by!
- F. So, anyone here feeling discouraged this morning? Attack that Giant that stands between you and all the God has planned for you!
- G. By the way: I finished the race ... not very fast, but I finished.

Next Week: What are you **WORRIED** about?!?

This morning we get to take communion. What a great opportunity to Cry Out to Jesus and tell Him what all you are struggling with. As we come up and take the bread and the cup and remember what all Jesus went through so that our Joy would be Complete; take time to give all the troubles, all the Giants back to God. Look around you. You have partners to help you fight off Giants ... we're in this together.

Let's Pray!