



Facing Distractions

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A Compelling Purpose Keeps You Going

1st Tactic: False Pretense

When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates— Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.” But they were scheming to harm me;

Nehemiah 6:1–2

Nehemiah Response: A Compelling Purpose Keeps You Going

And I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?” And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner.

Nehemiah 6:3–4

2nd Tactic: Smear Campaign

In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. In it was written, “It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, ‘There is a king in Judah.’ And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together.”

Nehemiah 6:5–7

Nehemiah Response: A Compelling Purpose Keeps You Going

Then I sent to him, saying, “No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind.” For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands.”

Nehemiah 6:8–9

3rd Tactic: Personal Betrayal

One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, “Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you.” But I said, “Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!” I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.

Nehemiah 6:10–13

Nehemiah Response: A Compelling Purpose Keeps You Going

Mission Accomplished

Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to intimidate me. So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

Nehemiah 6:14–16

What’s Your Compelling Purpose?

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1–2

1. What motivates you to do what you day in and day out? What are the things that can distract you from the things that you know matters most? How do you deal with those?
2. **Read Nehemiah 6:1-4** What stands out to you here? Why did Nehemiah's enemies change their tune and want to meet with him? What was the great work Nehemiah was doing that cause him to say no?
3. What "great work" are you doing in your personal life, marriage, family, work or wherever? How does great work motivate you when people and life are trying to distract you?
4. **Read Nehemiah 6:5-9** Why did Nehemiah's enemies change their tactics? How might the rumors and gossip affect Nehemiah, his fellow Jews and even the king of Persia?
5. Share a time when gossip and rumors affected you. How did you respond? What did you learn?
6. **Read Nehemiah 6:11-13** How did Nehemiah's friend turn against him? Why did he and how did Nehemiah respond?
7. **Read Nehemiah 6:14-16** How did God intervene and what was the outcome for Nehemiah and his enemies? What can you learn from this section of Nehemiah?
8. **Discuss this statement: "A compelling purpose keeps you going."** How does fixing your eyes on Jesus motivate us in a world filled with distractions?
9. **Pray for each other.** Where do you need help and motivation to keep going this week? How can you help someone else?