



SHARING SCRIPTURE

Discover • Jesus • Together

God's Call

For use: Oct. 20 - 26

Texts: Ezra 4:1-5; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ezra 5:1-5; Haggai 1; Ezra 4:6-24; Nehemiah 4; Nehemiah 6:1-13

Tracy Hinson, a meteorologist for KSDK News in St. Louis, knows how to take down trolls like a boss. When a body shamer said that Hinson needs to cover her stomach “bulge” when she’s on-air, Tracy had the perfect comeback.

The viewer sent this message to Hinson: “Do you ever watch yourself giving the weather report? Seems that you need a girdle for the stomach overhang which shortens the front of your dresses! Today was not the first time I have noticed this. Maybe you should wear a top that covers the bulge in your stomach.” Hinson posted a response on social media, telling the body shamer that she’s happy just the way she is. “Dear Mary, yes I do watch my air checks. NO I will not be strapping myself into a girdle because you don’t like my belly. I like pasta, bread and cheese too much to obsess over my weight. I like my body and that’s all that really matters. ❤️👍 Tracy #nomorefatshaming” [1]

This week’s lesson covers one of the greatest troll takedowns recorded in scripture. In one simple, succinct one-line zinger, Nehemiah tells his detractors that he’s too busy going about God’s work to be bothered by their petty little concerns. When Sanballat, Tobiah and Gesham entice Nehemiah to stop building the wall and step into their planned ambush, Nehemiah simply replies, “I am carrying on a great work and can’t come down.” Then he delivers the ultimate put-down: “Why should this work stop just so I can go down to you?” Ouch! Nehemiah’s work was momentous; these three trolls were insignificant.

This episode and Nehemiah’s wise response is still referred to today in lessons for leaders: don’t divert your energy and attention from what is important, to attend to inconsequential diversions. The work of rebuilding Jerusalem had experienced so many fits and starts already that Nehemiah knew he had to keep the momentum going forward or else the project would bog down again. God called the remnant of Israel to regroup, rebuild and then restart the work of sharing the plan of salvation to a lost world.

No petty distraction is worth diverting our attention from that work today.

~Chuck Burkeen

For Reflection

Connecting: Each one write on an index card one challenge you are facing at work (or elsewhere). Mix the cards up and distribute them among your group members. Now write on the card that you received one strategy to move past the challenge listed on said card. Discuss the value of looking at these challenges through fresh eyes and asking for objective counsel from friends who are not involved in the situation.

Sharing: Nehemiah 6:1-13 tells how Nehemiah disregarded the distractions of his opposition and sent a message that he would not quit building the wall. What is Nehemiah's best "plan B" alternative to the response he gave?

1. He could have sent covert assassins to take out Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem
2. He could have sent a counter offer to meet in a neutral site instead of enemy territory
3. He could have totally ignored their threats by refusing to give any response at all
4. He could have given in to their demands and halted the construction
5. He had no other options; he did the only thing he could possibly do
6. Other...

Applying: Think of situations where it may be better to just ignore a problem than to tackle it head on. List a few of them on a whiteboard and discuss the merits of each case. What are the potential downsides of investing too much time and energy into these problems?

Valuing: Do you have an issue in your life where you are perplexed about how to deal with it? Gather into groups of two or three and—sharing what you can about your situations—pray for each other.

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Three decades ago, we created this resource for small groups and Sabbath school classes, and it continues to bless so many people worldwide. Thank you for your continued interest in these biblical themes and what they mean to your life and those people with whom you share it.

Paul Richardson
Executive Director

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