

Small Group Study Guide

Dealing with Bullies

Series: Nehemiah Rebuilding a Life of Faith

Nehemiah 2:19-20; 4:1-16

From Sunday October 4, 2020

Pray: Lord direct our conversation this evening in a way that is pleasing to you and encouraging to others. Amen.

Appetizer:

Activity: Ask the group: was anyone bullied as a child or teenager? Has anyone experienced bullying as an adult? What made what the person did to you “bullying”? (Of course, it’s a pretty private conversation so no one should feel pressured to answer or provide specific details).

Reflection: It’s pretty much a given that you will run across bullies while you are building a life of faith. One definition of a bully describes it like this: Someone with a perceived position of power regularly seeking to harm or intimidate those whom they perceived as vulnerable. Bullying is basically an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships.

Question: What is the difference between being bullied and being challenged, critiqued, and hurt?

Main Course:

Have someone read Nehemiah 2:19-20; 4:1-16

Background: Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem were all people of different levels of influence and power. They also represented the traditional enemies of the people of Israel (Ammonites, and later on, those from Ashdod). Even though they were all leaders under the king in Persia, the king was far away and whatever happened, it would be one person’s word against another.

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem used typical bullying techniques to intimidate the Jewish people: They taunted, they exaggerated weaknesses, and they threatened. This produced the typical results of bullying in the Jewish people: dismay, discouragement, and distraction.

Question: Do you think the bullying would have had as much of an affect if it had come from people with very little power (example: no position, no army, no weapons, no strength)? Why or why not?

Question: What is it about being in a position of power that makes bullying affective?

*Contemporary Reflection. First Nations in Canada have often used the language of being bullied by “people of privilege”. In other words, when someone has more opportunity, they have power, and this power has been misused in the relationship between First Nations and those that come from other heritages. This language has sometimes divided people into two groups: Those that don’t see themselves as more privileged than others and those that recognize that privilege has been part of the equation.

Response to Bullying

Nehemiah showed that there are at least three ways to respond to bullying: We present our case before God, we fight for our faith, and we remind ourselves that we are not alone. Sometimes it takes only one negative voice in our lives to demoralize our faith.

Question: How do we do these things in the face of bullying?

- How do we present our case before God? What does that look like?
- How do we fight for our faith? Is this a personal thing or a public thing? (For instance, is fighting for our faith campaigning in pro-life demonstrations, or other issues of injustice, or writing politicians about policies... or is it pursuing activities that help us abide in Christ like prayer and study and spiritual disciplines? Or is it both?)
- How do we remind ourselves that we are not alone?

Dessert:

Read Philippians 2:1-11 out loud. It is an example of what Jesus did with the power he had. When we face bullies, may we avoid the temptation to bully back and address them with Christ as our example.