

Simplify

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God has created you to enjoy work in your family, church (God) and for pay.

Today, I plan to show you how to take a massive step forward as you move from Simplified to Satisfied. Are you ready?

Now, this will require the exertion of energy, the diligence to defeat discouragement, and a willingness to stay at the task even in the midst of a fire fight. Are you ready?

¹⁰ Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." ¹¹ Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." ¹² Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." (Nehemiah 4-NIV)

Let me start out by asking you some questions about your family (marriage), church (God) and employment. While the categories might be broad, the Holy Spirit and God's word specializes on focusing with laser-like accuracy on the concern, on the crippling habit and the challenge at hand.

On a scale of one to ten, take a moment and mentally assess your current satisfaction levels. Just mentally, not out loud, I don't want to start a fight so early in the sermon.

Are you satisfied with your marriage, sex, and marital teamwork?

Are you satisfied with your faith journey, church, and relationship with God?

Are you satisfied with your work, income, and your boss?

Are you satisfied with your cell phone, your pets name, what you had for dinner last night, the car you drive, the neighbors you have or your closet full of clothes and the furniture you sit on?

Are you satisfied with the body you tote around,

...the amount of money you tote around,

...these kids God has given you, that you tote around.

How satisfied are you with the overall circumstances, conditions, and challenges of your life? Pause. That's what I want to get at. I want you to lock in a number between 1-10. This is the one that really matters.

And I think if your number is 6 or less, perhaps some potential discouragement has set in, and you are facing what Nehemiah faced when he returned to Jerusalem to rally the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

(Nehemiah, read some verses to give some background)

Let me offer 3 probing questions, that I think can uncover some of the sources of discouragement.

Remember the goal is to help you simplify, and I am suggesting that when you do, you will go from Simplify to Satisfy.

Are you using your God given gifts in your work?

Is the culture of your work environment draining or delightful?

Does your work setting bring the best out of you?

Our text reminds each of us, that discouragement is defined by the formula:

Loss of strength + Loss of confidence + Loss of protection =

DISCOURAGEMENT

¹⁰ Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." ¹¹ Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." ¹² Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." (Neh 4-NIV)

Your work satisfaction disappears when your strength declines, your confidence diminishes, and your enemies attempt to destroy your God called efforts.

God's work in your family, church and employment never moves forward uncontested by the evil one.

For most people, dealing with a live active bee's nest is a little intimidating. It doesn't matter how much gasoline, or how big of a broom you have...when you smack that thing, you better be running.

Nehemiah didn't realize when he came back to Jerusalem for what seemed to be a harmless building project, he had no idea, he was daily smacking at a beehive filled with angry bees, bent on stinging the life out of him.

I mean what could be that big of a deal about taking some time off from work, going back to the city of your ancestors and giving some help with securing a new wall around the city. On the surface it looked like a typical project that he had seen many times back in Persia.

The rebuilding of ancient walls was a very common practice. The cities of his day all had walls, so his objective was not unusual.

Nehemiah is thinking he'll be in and out even before he's noticed missing by many of the folk back in exile. I'll have this done on schedule. Maybe even a little early, saving the company some money for delivering the project ahead of schedule. Then, back home - and pick up with business as usual.

This would not be the case. Every time Nehemiah took a swing at the building project, it was like hitting an active hive that spewed a new batch of angry bees: The first, group that launched an attack on Nehemiah, did so using **sarcasm**.

The second group that launched a pincher attack because Nehemiah was still moving ahead, this time used **mockery**.

Wave after wave descended on Nehemiah like a plague landing on an unsuspected city leaving behind **opposition, criticism** and eventually **conspiracy**.

And before Nehemiah could see where the aerial assault was coming from "discouragement has set in amongst the troops and now, the work force was on strike." The work conditions left the people slumping and sliding into discouraged:

(6) So, we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. (10) Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is much rubble and that we cannot build." (Neh. 4-NIV)

In this chapter we will see the faces of discouragement. Whenever a person gives themselves to the rebuilding process, they need to be aware of this painful, yet simple truth.

God's work never moves forward uncontested by Satan.

Friend, you better get used to having your mug shot posted in the "post-office," of hell. The Adversary has your number. He hates it when a man or women commits themselves to God's plan for rebuilding their shattered lives. Satan is the incarnation of everything that is evil, hateful and slavery inducing. He is the sum of all that is evil and the chief manipulator in the hearts of men to do his evil bidding. To understand what Satan is like, look closely at your family, church (God) and employment.

That's what Nehemiah faced, and you and I face it weekly. The indicator of the serpents' subtle strategies is seen in "the many faces of discouragement." We see this in verses 1-3 of Nehemiah 4. Let me read it slowly. See if you can pick out each bee sting.

The sting of ridicule. The sting of criticism. The sting of mockery. The sting of deception. The sting of intimidation.

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews,² and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?"³ Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!" (Neh 4-NIV)

Attacks from the enemy on your family, church and employment are inevitable, insidious, and often invisible. Let me break it down, break it down, break it down.

Look at chapter 4, I want to introduce you to the villain of the story. Because these verses are attached to chapter 3, this indicates the enemy's assault is attached to the building activities.

The primary focus of the opposition centers on the Governor of Samaria, Sanballat. He is identified as the source of trouble, opposition, conspiracy, and hatred toward the Jews:

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed."

One thing that Sanballat failed to realize was that God had a personal stake in this project. The people of God were living on a prophetic timeline, that God was personally interested in. To oppose Nehemiah was to oppose God Himself. God has a personal interest in His children.

In the National Football League, the acrostic "YAC," perhaps is only known by a few diehard football fans. It stands for "Yards After Contact." The phrase was coined by network analyst, "John Madden."

Madden, a former coach of the Oakland Raiders, has compiled this new measurement by "counting the number of yards that a runner makes after an opposing player hits him." (Rebuilding, OS Hawkins, pg. 81-82).

When a runner is hit at the line of scrimmage by an opposing player, he doesn't throw down the ball, and immediately return to the huddle.

He doesn't get up and start a fight or complain to the referees that the hit was too painful. He doesn't get up and bad mouth the opposing player and say, "He is going to take his ball and go home."

What does he do? When he is hit, he keeps the legs churning. He keeps his momentum moving forward. He is looking for someone to throw a block. To free him. Great runners in the NFL make their most significant yards after they have been hit. They simply keep moving forward. Some of us never achieve all that God has for us because as soon as we are hit, we give up. Throw a temper tantrum. Tell everyone we are taking our ball home.

It's the Yards After Contact that really count not, just as in football, but in real life. Nehemiah's kept the wall rebuilding moving through YAC.

First, let's look at the contact. It was painful. It was a bell ringing. It was continuous. And most of all it was dirty. When you are lying on the ground under a pile, and your opponent is spitting in your face, kneeling you in the groin, biting your hand, before the pile gets up, that is dirty. The enemy never plays fair.

The devil only has two strategies.

Strategy A, "deception" (vs. 3) *What they are building—if even a fox climbed on it, he would break down their wall of stones!*

Strategy B, "intimidation" (vs. 10) *Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work."*

Look at the first three verses, and watch the contact that Sanballat (Satan) makes with Nehemiah and his troops:

(1) He is a relentless foe (vs. 1-3). Look at all the different ways that Satan tries to get at his servant:

- *What are they doing?
- *Will they restore?
- *Will They offer?
- *Can they bring back?
- *What are they building?

What we see in Sanballat we see in Satan. You need to learn this about the devil:

- ...he never has a good day!
- ...don't think that he relaxes or takes a vacation.
- ...he never says, "I think I'll go easy, send my third string troops."

A lesson for the wise, those attacks come in waves. Don't let your guard down for a minute. Don't get side-tracked in his petty announcements of your incompetency. His real concern is his loss of power or control.

Sanballat was ticked off because, Nehemiah has come with letters representing greater authority. His very place and power had been shelved. He didn't like that.

When people in a skirmish are instructed to submit to authority and follow the detailed plans for resolve of the problem, those who are not interested in resolve will expose their true colors, when forced to wait for action.

(2) Satan Attacks Your Weaknesses (vs. 13), “station some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places.”

One of the weakness Satan always tries to expose is motivation or intent. Sanballat was suggesting that the rebuilding was being done for the purpose or conspiracy against the king. The real truth was that Sanballat cared nothing of the king’s domain. His problem was a loss of control.

To me it seems amazing how noble Satan can try to be, using ignorant people, don’t you see the real reason? Sanballat’s comment, they’ll fortify and rebel, is only indicative of Satan’s dissatisfaction with lost control. It also shows the great lengths that Satan will go to, in order to create doubt in people’s minds.

Listen to some oft-deployed devices:

*God wants you sick, so you’ll trust him more.”

*Financial difficulties are his plan, so he can keep you humble.

Of course, adversity does mean advance. Pressure does create faith and character. But, make no mistake, the devil is not interested in your weakness for godly reasons. He wants to exploit your weakness. But God wants to bring you to complete strength.

(3) Satan Attacks Their Worship Of God (vs. 2) *Will they offer sacrifices?*

Sanballat’s third question, is designed to attack the people’s worship of God. Sanballat knows that when people can worship unhindered, real power is generated. As long as the walls are in ruin, people’s worship was still threatened.

Has anyone ever heard the question, “and you call yourself a Christian? The obvious point of the remark is to embarrass and expose your weakness. The idea is that you should withdrawal from the race.

And our weaknesses and frailties can be embarrassing. Satan loves to capitalize on your mistakes. This is the Satanic question behind, will you offer sacrifices? You are not worthy to do anything but retire from the race.

Our response to him when he challenges us at a place of worship because of our frailties is God’s promise, he who began a good work in me will complete it. I have access to him through forgiveness and he has invited me to enjoy Him through worship, and I will. Be gone you foul spirit!

(4) Satan Attacks The Pace Of The Project (vs.2). *Will they finish in a day?*

In the fourth challenge, Sanballat is ridiculing them about the length of the effort. It's the same mockery that Satan tries, you know you've tried this before, what makes you think this time is different.

The enemy will seek to wear you down with the length of the rebuilding process in your life. This project for rebuilding has been on the drawing board for well over 70 years! When things don't seem to get done fast enough in your life, be careful, this ridicule will come!

In a day, Ha. Boy, you sure been at this a long time. All I see is two steps forward, and three steps back! Haven't you been down this road before? Haven't you learned that yet? But this time things are different. For Nehemiah has come on the scene.

(5) Satan Attacks & Ridicules Your Building Materials (vs. 2). *Can they bring these stones back to life from the heaps of rubble burned as they are?*

Finally, Sanballat questions the qualities of the materials used for the project. Remember, Nehemiah came with only lumber from the Kings Forest. And Sanballat asks, are you going to use this broken and burnt rubble to rebuild with? The answer to what God is showing us is so insightful, the walls will be built by reclaiming, retooling, remaking and recovering that which was destroyed.

What a message of hope and a beautiful picture. God is able to completely redeem, and restore, He can glorify Himself in the midst of and out of the pieces of your broken past. He can remove the broken pain of your past and rebuild with burnt stone.

When you lose your heart, you lose your confidence, what is affected most is your motivation. The ability to generate energy to move from **Simplify to Satisfaction**. We all face discouragement! It's a sign that you have a heartbeat. But discouragement usually runs in seasons. The good news is that around the corner is a new season of hope, joy and motivation to pull off the rebuilding project. Let me remind you of the enemy's plan.

Attacks on your family, church and employment from the enemy are inevitable.

Attacks on your family, church and employment from the enemy are insidious.

Attacks on your family, church, and employment from the evil one is often invisible.

Repairing the walls of your family, church and employment require biblical strategies, God given strength and an unwavering trust in an All-Powerful God who will fight for you.

What Is God's Cure For Discouragement in Your Work? (Neh 4:13-23)

Are you discouraged in your family, church (God) or work? Here a 4 actions steps helping you move from Simplify to Satisfy. Making these course corrections will ensure that these steps to simplify will lead to a life that satisfies.

- (A) Under God's supervision, make proper adjustments to your Rebuilding. *(13) Therefore, I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall.*
- (B) Under God's supervision, stay at the task at hand. *(15) we all returned to the wall, each to his own work.*
- (C) Under God's supervision, engage the enemy with spiritual warfare. *(16) From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spear, shields, bows and armor.*
- (D) Under God's supervision, identify a rallying point. *(20) Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!*

Moving from Simplify to Satisfaction often requires that you adjust your satisfaction, by dealing with your discouragement.

Discouragement steals your strength, confidence, and protection from the evil one.