



ENTER God's presence

**Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory in the heavens.
Through the praise of children and infants you have
established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.** Psalm 8:1-2

Lord God, you are the Lord Almighty and great is your name in all the earth! Even in your glory and majesty you care for us, your people. You speak your word to us to lead and guide us through this life to eternal life with you in your Kingdom. Help us now to have ears ready to hear your word and hearts ready to receive it. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.



SHARE life together

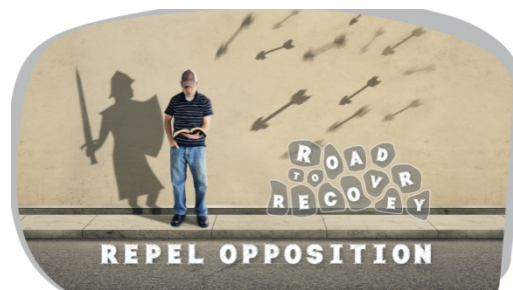
1. **How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week, in your highs and your lows?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Have you ever been confronted by someone who was opposed to your faith or the church? What happened?**
4. **In what ways can opposition be a positive thing?**

Pushback...resistance...it's increasing. States are pushing back against the Federal Government & each other. Councils & business are pushing back against measures that seem to be wrecking the economy & destroying jobs. More & more experts and people at the coalface are pushing back against strategies that feel like they hurt more than they help. Agree or disagree...it's there. We shouldn't be surprised. Any time there is a perceived threat to the status quo, bold new strategies are implemented, or change is introduced, pushback, resistance or opposition will not be far behind.

Halfway through the rebuild of Jerusalem's wall, the opposition came from without and the pushback from within. But Nehemiah demonstrates a faith-filled way to Repel opposition that comes when we begin to live God's vision into life-changing reality and lead people on the Road to Recovery. While the work of God will always arouse the opposition of enemy, God is in control & continues the work of his kingdom through us, whatever the challenge. It's a timely reminder when discouragement comes and pushback occurs.

Week beginning
Sunday 5th August 2021

Worship series:
Road to Recovery



VERSE for the week

Then I (Nehemiah) said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!"

Nehemiah 4:19-20



REMEMBER this week

**When opposition
arises and
discouragement
comes...
remember the Lord,
pray and then act
wisely together with
others.**



LISTEN attentively

Read Nehemiah 4:1-15

- 5. What is inspiring, challenging or confronting for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
- 6. How does the opposition of Sanballat and Tobiah compare to the opposition the church sometimes experiences from the world today?**
- 7. Nehemiah and the Israelites addressed the threats with swords, shields and spears. What tools do we have to use to repel opposition today?**

Over the last few weeks we have been exposed to two very different kinds of opposition. We have seen opposition to State Government imposed Covid-19 restrictions by protesters. We have seen criticism and opposition to the Federal Government's handling of Covid vaccination roll-outs, from various State Premiers. We have seen numerous social media campaigns and various anti-vaccination protests opposing the distribution or use of vaccines all together. It seems that wherever you look, there is something you could be opposed to, or someone else who is opposed to what you believe or value.

On the flip side, we have seen opposition and rivalries in the field of sports as the Tokyo Olympics got underway. A personal highlight from these Olympics so far has been Australian Swimmer, Ariarne Titmus, thanking her long time rival, American swimmer Katie Ledecky, for pushing her to be better and providing the drive she needed to improve her own performance in the pool.

Opposition can derail and destabilise us, or it can fortify and focus us. The key is where our vision lies.

- 8. Can you recall a time when you, or your team, encountered some tough opposition? Did it make you want to quit, or spur you on to improve and get better? Why?**
- 9. When we encounter resistance or opposition, we can sometimes lose confidence. How does being part of a team, rather than being out on a limb by yourself, help in the face of opposition?**

Part of the key for Nehemiah in repelling opposition, was to remember who he was working for and to place his confidence in his God, not in his own ability. But Nehemiah does not just pray and simply leave it at that. He prays (in verses 4 and 5) that God would turn their own insults and schemes back on them, but he also then goes to set up guardsmen in the weaker points of the wall. He trusts in God's protection but also recognises that the people still have a part to play in all of this.



GROW deeper

Nehemiah then goes on (v14) to remind the Israelites and their leaders and officials, who it is that leads them. It is not Nehemiah himself, but their God who is great and awesome. This kind of reminder is one of our greatest weapons in facing opposition. There are more than 80 times in Scripture where God reminds his people, the Israelites, that "he is the God who brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." If you are familiar with the story you will recall the 10 plagues which God sent on Egypt and through which he demonstrated his power. You might recall God parting the Red Sea for the Israelites to safely cross and then pushing it back to wipe out Pharaoh's army. You might recall the miracle of manna in the desert as God cared for and met the needs of his people. The story of God's redeeming acts for Israel are miraculous and powerful, but so too is the story of his redeeming acts for us through the life, death and resurrection, of Jesus. Not only did the ancient Israelites need reminding but so did the early Christians and so do we.

Read Romans 8:31-39

- 10. Jesus' death on a cross doesn't look much like a victory in the eyes of the world but how does Jesus death and resurrection help you to face opposition?**

11. What things help you to remember who God is and what he has done for you when you are facing opposition?

A bit like a scary movie, if we know how everything ends, then much of the fear is taken away. Jesus' victory over sin, death and the devil, are the ultimate victory, we know how everything is going to end – we really have nothing to fear. However, when we lose sight of that ending – when we fail to lift our eyes and see God at work in our lives and in the world, then the fear can creep back in. Ultimately, it is our fear that stops us from doing what we need to do. Nehemiah's solution to the planned opposition wasn't rocket science. If you are facing the threat of attack by an enemy, you increase your defences. Nehemiah did not hide in fear while he waited for God to answer his prayer. Instead he prayed and then boldly got on with doing the work God had given him to do.

12. What are the tasks God has given his people, the church, to do? What often stops us or gets in the way of us getting those tasks done?

13. How has fear been a limiting factor in your walk with Jesus?



LIVE purposefully

Nehemiah shows us time and time again the importance of prayer. However, sometimes we can be guilty of using prayer as a means to get out of what God is asking us to do. We might think, 'well if I ask God to take care of this, then I won't need to worry about it.' I certainly know plenty of students who fail to study for tests, who will pray that God will get them through. God loves us and cares for us and he promises to provide all our needs but our greatest need, whether we recognize it or not, is a deeper faith and trust in him. That grows as we work with him and see him continue to exceed our expectations of what is possible. You see it in our own human development, children who have everything done for them never have the opportunity to develop their own skills. It is when God presents us with opportunities, like opposition, which stretch us and our faith, that it has the chance to grow.

14. What challenges are you aware of that are coming up for you this week? How might you think of them as opportunities rather than obstacles?

15. Who are some people that you are aware of who might be feeling opposed or attacked or abandoned at the moment? How might you remind them, or show them, the love and grace of God.

16. What are some of the challenges or opposition that you see facing the church right now? How might we work together to address the threat?



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his glorious majesty and power with which he protects and sustains us.
- Pray for those who persecute you and for those who oppose and persecute Christians around the world. Pray that they might come to know the love and peace of life with Jesus.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you confidence in the promises of God and to remember all that he has done for you.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], God has your life in his hands. Amen.