**Sermon date –** October 17, 2021

**Series –** Nehemiah: Defeating the Seductive Power of Distraction

**Scripture --** Nehemiah 6:1-14

6 Now when [a](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote1)Sanballat and Tobiah and [b](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote2)Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it ([c](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnote3)although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of [d](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote4)Ono.” But they intended to do me harm. 3 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?” 4 And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. 5 In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written, “It is reported among the nations, and Geshem[1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote5) also says it, that you and [e](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote6)the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. 7 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.” 8 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.” 9 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,[2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote7) strengthen my hands.

10 Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was [f](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote8)confined to his home, he said, “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night.” 11 But I said, “Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live?[3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote9) I will not go in.” 12 And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, [g](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote10)but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me. 14 [h](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnote11)Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also [i](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/nehemiah/6/1-14#footnote12)the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

**Big Idea –** We defeat distraction with greater distractions: God’s calling. God’s reality. God’s word.

**Summary –** How many times a day do you get distracted? Technology has created a “*compulsion loop”* in our brain for novelty, constant stimulation, and immediate gratification. It’s not all technology. Sometimes worry can distract us. Someone we love is going through something hard and we can’t stop thinking “what if?” Or we worry about work and what we face tomorrow. The most dangerous distractions are those which divert our attention from God. The most dangerous distractions sidetrack our orientation from the greatest PERSON in existence to countless lesser ones. That is the seductive power of distraction; that we would divert our eyes from greater to the lesser, from the grander to the smaller, from the infinite to the fleeting, from the Almighty to the tiny!

In chapter 6, as the wall building project draws to completion, Nehemiah’s enemies make one last effort to distract the wall. They seek to kill Nehemiah. He refuses their request to meet multiple times. One of the reasons why Nehemiah was fearless before Sanballat was that he knew exactly what it was God called him to do. He was conscious of his calling. Your calling means this: **Your God-given conviction about your life’s direction.** People who are called have a conviction in their heart about what it is God wants their life to look like.

Do you know your calling? What ministry has God given you? What abilities has he placed in you? What opportunities have come your way? What godly and wise people have come your way to affirm the gifts in your life?

**Questions –**

* What distracts you?
* Why is Nehemiah not distracted by the repeated requests to meet with the local leaders?
* Calling – **Your God-given conviction about your life’s direction.** People who are called have a conviction in their heart about what it is God wants their life to look like. Generally, your calling will track with how God has gifted you. What is MY SHAPE – My **S**piritual gifts. My **h**eart. My **a**bilities. My **p**ersonality. My **e**xperiences.

Do you know what God has called you to do?

Does considering each of the parts of “My SHAPE”? help you determine your calling?

What next steps could you take to discern the calling God has placed on your life?

* We can be tempted to appease people who do not respect what God has called us to do. Someone else’s needs do not constitute a call. Distracting, unrealistic expectations of people—well-meaning or not—can pull us away from our call. How have you seen or experienced other people’s distracting expectations keeping you away from what God is calling you to do? If you feel comfortable, share some examples.
* To defeat the distraction of meaningless activity, we must possess the nerve to ask this question: ***Who are you willing to disappoint?*** It’s a very clarifying question.

It helps you understand what you are really pursuing in your time commitments. Whether you are chasing someone’s approval. How should you respond to people who are trying to distract you from the calling God has placed on your life?

* We live in a time of mass illusion in our culture. Many are deceived about what is reality. What is truth. Opinions run strong and conflict is sometimes violent. How do we hold tight to God’s reality in this world?

How should we respond to those who believe and act differently?

* Another way to overcome distraction is through God’s word. How does God’s word keep us from distraction?

Are there verses you turn to when you feel uncertain or need assurance of what your next step should be?