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Title: Nudge: No Call Is Obstacle Free

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Text: [Nehemiah 2:10, 4:6-8, 6:15-16](#)

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Today we are wrapping up a three-part worship series called Nudge: Finding and Following God's Call. We've been looking at those nudges in our lives that get us moving into God's call upon our lives, using the book of Nehemiah as our guide. The first week we learned that we must pay attention and we must have the courage to respond to

God's call. Last week, we explored how we cannot do it alone, that calls require community. Today, we see through Nehemiah's experience that no call is obstacle-free. As Nehemiah and his community start to rebuild the walls and heal Jerusalem, they face opposition and obstacles.

The reality is that no call is obstacle-free.

Think about the times you try to move in a new direction, and it feels like everything is conspiring against you and that new direction.

- You decide to eat healthily and that's the week that people decide to bring donuts into the office every morning.
- We say that we are going to stick to a budget and that is the week that the car and the washing machine break down.
- We intend to slow down and make time for God, but then we are filled with an incredibly busy week.

We know that God is nudging us, calling us to play some part in God's future, into God's vision for the world, but it feels like there are just so many obstacles.

As Nehemiah feels that nudge and dares to respond, after he recognizes the need for a community alongside him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, after all, seems to be in alignment, he finds resistance.

" When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard this, they were very angry that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel... We continued to build the wall. All of it was joined together, and it reached half of its intended height because the people were

eager to work. But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people of Ashdod heard that the work on the walls was progressing and the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. They plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to create a disturbance in it.”
(Nehemiah 2:10, 4:6-8 CEB)

We see active resistance to God at work, to the forward progress of God at work.

Arthur Schopner was a German philosopher in the 19th century who believe that all truth passes through three stages.

- Ridiculed
- Opposed
- Accepted as being self-evident (i.e., everyone has always known this)

John Leal may not be a name that you are familiar with, but we all benefit from his work in the early 20th century. He recognized the large death rate in the early 1900s from Typhoid fever and other water-borne diseases. So, he conceived of and implemented the first disinfection of a water system in the United States, using chlorine. When it was announced that he wanted to treat water systems across the country, there was an outcry and public hysteria. It was new and people didn't want it. Obstacle after obstacle was put forward, but Leal and others pushed through until the majority of water systems were using chlorine to clean and treat the water. After a few years, there was a 43% reduction in the mortality rate and a 74% reduction in the infant mortality rate. Treatment of the water systems was recognized as a major factor in the increased life expectancy in the United States.

On a less serious note, the author Charles Dickens was met with ridicule and challenge because he suggested that it was better to take a daily shower rather than a monthly shower, which was the custom at the time.

The truth is that new ideas are often met with resistance.

Those calls God places on us to move forward are often met with resistance and obstacles put in our way.

We see this time and time again in Jesus' life and ministry. His ministry was met with obstacles and resistance, most especially by those in power. The Gospels highlight several moments where the religious leaders of the day resist Jesus because he is a threat to their power and control and to the ways things are. This exchange in the Gospel of Mark captures the tension

"Jesus and his disciples entered Jerusalem again. As Jesus was walking around the temple, the chief priests, legal experts, and elders came to

him. They asked, "What kind of authority do you have for doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?" (Mark 11:27-28 CEB)

Jesus' life is proof that any challenge to the status quo, to the way things "have always been done" will be met with obstacles and resistance.

There is no way around it... if we resolve to do something new, if we feel God is calling us to do a new thing, there will be obstacles.

It is why we must remember that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves.

It's why it is a real and meaningful feeling and place, to live in the tension of what it is and what can be.

Those nudges we sense; those calls on our life from God, are part of something much bigger than what we can see now.

Nehemiah's story bares this truth.

"So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul. It took fifty-two days. When our enemies heard about this, all of the nations around us were afraid and their confidence was greatly shaken. They knew that this work was completed with the help of our God." (Nehemiah 6:15-16 CEB)

The wall is finished, but that is not the end of his story, in many ways, it's only the beginning. He is appointed governor of Jerusalem and serves for twelve years in that capacity. His nudge that led to a call to rebuild a city ultimately leads to a call to build a people.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr captures the way God works and moves in our lives so well when he said this: *"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."*

Maybe that's the biggest obstacle we need to confront when feeling the nudge and hearing the call of God, that we are held back by inaction and indifference because we really can never see the whole staircase. But we know that one who does. We know and trust the one who sees the whole picture.

Ultimately, every one of our calls, in the larger picture, have the same ultimate purpose.

To reconcile the world back to God.

To share love, grace, to bring hope and healing and wholeness into a world that too often falls into patterns of cynicism, competition, and brokenness.

To help all find the abundant life that Jesus was so passionate about for this world.

Let Us Pray