

SUPERNATURAL

BEGINNING

Have you ever met anybody obsessed with UFO's?

Illustration: I once worked with a guy named Mike who was totally into UFO's and alien invasions and government conspiracies covering up the supposed "truth" about aliens. He once took his 2 week annual vacation and spent it in the New Mexico desert. He visited Area 51, the government's secret base where a downed alien flying saucer was kept and studied. And he visited all of the tourist spots to get all the stories he could get. When he came back, I asked him if the aliens were coming to get us, he answered me, "They're already here." I think he believed it.

Mike was also into that TV show from the mid 90's called *The X Files*, which was a show that centered on a division of the FBI that dealt with the paranormal and supernatural activity. And there have been all sorts of shows and movies and books about science fiction and the supernatural. In fact, there's a whole industry out there dedicated to sci-fi and fantasy, *you know why?*

Here's a Thought:

Things that seem *supernatural* get people's attention.

- Things that seem supernatural *stand out* from everyday life.
- Things that stand out from everyday life *get our attention*.

Transition: *When you're watching the news, or surfing on the Internet, and there's some bizarre story that really seems out of the ordinary, isn't your curiosity aroused, don't you pay a little closer attention?*

CONNECTING

I think we can all think of stories we've heard that were so unusual we can still remember them even if it's been a long time since we originally heard them. They may have been some creepy ghost story we heard around a campfire when we were kids or about some distant relative who was miraculously healed from some life threatening illness.

But no matter what the story is, when it seems like something supernatural is going on, our interest is peaked, our curiosity is aroused, and we wonder if the story could be true.

As Christians we watch for God's presence and activity in His creation. We want His blessing and protection on our lives and this requires letting Him be close and active in our lives. But our mouths should not be the only thing telling others He's real. *Our lives should reveal His supernatural presence.*

As Christians, we want our lives to be supernatural enough for unbelievers to witness the God's realness.

Here's a Question That Believers Need Answered:

How can Christians let God's *supernatural* presence be *seen* by unbelievers in the world?

Transition: *As we continue our study in the Book of Nehemiah, we will look at what unbelievers in Nehemiah's day concluded about what they witnessed in Jerusalem in 444 B.C. Turn to Nehemiah chapter 6. Nehemiah 6:15-19.*

Story Background

Nehemiah and the Jews had been working hard and acting on their faith in God. They *knew* they were working on a project that God Himself had brought them to. Although they had been threatened by their enemies and had to deal with corruption from within their own people, they chose to continue to act on their faith. *They prayed and they acted.*

The Jews living in Jerusalem were submissive to Nehemiah's authority and leadership because Nehemiah practiced what he preached and was not hypocritical in his own life.

In chapter 6, their lives and their work are still incredibly difficult. Add to their troubles continued threats on their lives, false reports being spread by their enemies, along with plots to discredit or even kill the leadership, and we have the makings of a doomed project.

Text: Nehemiah 6:15-19

15 So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul [*around September*], in fifty and two days. This massive work project of completing the reconstruction of the wall around the entire City of Jerusalem, amid deplorable living and working conditions, and in spite of major opposition was done in **52 days!**

16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen [*unbelievers*] that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes [*lost confidence; disheartened*]: **for they perceived that this work was wrought [*accomplished*] of our God.**

The hostile unbelievers (enemies) and the non-hostile unbelievers (heathen) heard about and saw that the massive reconstruction project was not only completed, but in record time. They are completely discouraged because they determined that this humanly impossible feat had been achieved by the Jewish God.

17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. **18** For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. **19** Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

Verses 17-19 are a good reminder that seeing is not always believing. The enemies of the Jews continued to work against them and continued to try to intimidate Nehemiah.

Passage Recap Questions

1. How long did the wall reconstruction take? **52 Days.**
From a human perspective, an impossible task was accomplished in an extraordinarily short amount of time.

2. What did the unbelievers determine after hearing about and seeing the completed wall? **The unbelievers determined the project's rapid completion was due to supernatural involvement and credited the Jewish God with its success.** Both hostile and non-hostile unbelievers concluded that the wall's completion was directly due to the Jewish God's effort.

3. Did the evidence of a supernatural presence convince the unbelievers to accept the Jewish God? No. Even when the unbelievers concluded that God's involvement was why the wall was up, they chose to reject the God.

In Nehemiah chapter 5, the unbelievers in and around Jerusalem ridiculed the faith of the Jews working with Nehemiah. Even after witnessing first hand what God had accomplished, they still chose to subvert the Jews' effort and tried to scare off Nehemiah.

Summary of the Bible Passage

God supernaturally rebuilt the wall through faithful Jews making His presence visible to the unbelievers in Jerusalem.

The unbelievers attributed the success of the reconstruction project to God. The enemies of the Jews knew how aggressively they had tried to frighten off the Jews from the wall project. The Jew's enemies also knew what an overwhelming and nearly impossible task rebuilding the wall was. But when it was completed, it was evident to all of them that this supernatural feat was by the hand of God Himself.

***Transition:** While every Christian living today may not be called to some massive, humanly-impossible project that requires miraculous power, the supernatural presence of God can be active in each of our lives.*

APPLYING

Here's the Main Idea for the Lesson

God accomplishes supernatural things through faithful believers to draw outsiders into relationship with Him.

What do we need to do?

If we want there to be evidence of God's supernatural presence in our lives, *we must faithfully persevere to let God accomplish unusual things through us.*

Group Discussion

Question What are some things God could *supernaturally accomplish* through us that might seem *unusual* to unbelievers in the world?

- Making a seemingly impossible marriage work
- Breaking a chemical/alcohol addiction
- Respectfully enduring a difficult employment position
- Quitting sexually immoral addictions
- Not separating from difficult children/parents
- Not caving in to peer pressure
- Abiding by traffic laws
- Others

Question If we faithfully persevere and God is able to accomplish some supernatural thing in or through our lives, and unbelievers who witness it do NOT get saved, are we responsible for doing something wrong? No. We've done what we can do, the choice to enter into a relationship with God is still up to the individual.

Why do we need to let God's presence be seen in our lives?

Because unbelievers' eternal futures are at stake, it is vital that we let God perform unusual accomplishments through us to draw unbelievers into relationship with Him.

So how do individual believers let God's supernatural presence be evident to unbelievers around us?

1. Ask God to help you *identify* a challenge in your life that you might be tempted to pull back from or handle the world's way.
2. Determine from God's Word what a *faith-filled* response would look like in this area of your life.
3. *Surrender your way* of handling this area, and *begin God's way* of doing life in this area.

Remember to check back with God daily to assess your progress. It may take time for unbelievers to notice that something unusual is going on, but remember, whether they tell you or not, if you are consistently doing life God's way, they'll know *something* is up!

INSPIRING

Picture the impact our church family as a whole would have on Kissimmee if in each of our lives something supernatural seemed to be going on. The world is used to seeing drug and alcohol addiction, sexual immorality, dysfunctional families, divorce, disgruntled employees, road rage, hate, and prejudice.

They deserve to have the hope that we have gotten used to having. They deserve to know the reason our lives seem like something unusual and supernatural is going on. If we faithfully persevere, God will accomplish supernatural things through us! Believe it – Nehemiah did!

Remember:

God accomplishes supernatural things through faithful believers to draw outsiders into relationship with Him.