

JUSTICE AND THE FEAR OF GOD

NEHEMIAH 5:1-13

CHURCH GROUP SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE – MARCH 17, 2024

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 5:1-13 ESV

1 Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. 2 For there were those who said, "With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain, that we may eat and keep alive." 3 There were also those who said, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine." 4 And there were those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. 5 Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards."

6 I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. 7 I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, "You are exacting interest, each from his brother." And I held a great assembly against them 8 and said to them, "We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!" They were silent and could not find a word to say. 9 So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies? 10 Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. 11 Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them." 12 Then they said, "We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised. 13 I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said "Amen" and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION

When you hear the term 'justice,' what comes to mind?

SERMON RECAP

We should all agree that injustice is sin and where we have opportunity, we should do something about it. Nehemiah's response to the social injustice around him gives us a helpful framework for evaluating our own responses to injustice:

- Anger vs. Apathy
- Reflection vs. Reaction
- Courage vs. Comfort
- Conviction vs. Consensus
- Sacrifice vs. Sentiment

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Observation: What does the passage say?

1. Read Nehemiah 5:1-13 aloud as a group. Before interpreting or applying the passage, share observations about it. What words of opposition do God's detractors use in verses 1-6 and how did Nehemiah respond?
 - In this passage, what challenges and issues were the Israelites facing?
 - What was Nehemiah's response to these issues? (Nehemiah 5:6)
 - What concern was behind Nehemiah's response? (Nehemiah 5:9)
 - What actions did Nehemiah's response lead him to take? (Nehemiah 5:7-11, 12b-13a)
 - What actions did the nobles, officials, and all the assembly take in response? (Nehemiah 5:12a, 13b)
2. How would you explain or summarize today's scriptures in your own words?

Interpretation: What does the passage mean?

1. How does the Lord respond to unrighteousness (cf. Psalm 7:11, 99:4a)? What are other scriptural examples of His response to injustice?
2. Why might our response to injustice matter to the Lord (cf. Nehemiah 5:9)? How might our biblically-based response to

injustice serve as a living testimony of the Lord?

Application: How can we apply this passage to our lives?

1. What is your normal reaction to injustice? What considerations (e.g., cultural, personal, or biblical) and/or concerns influence your response?
2. How does the Bible define and describe justice? Based on today's passage, how might biblically-based responses to injustice differ from cultural or worldly responses to injustice?
3. In what ways might you have contributed to or profited from someone else's unjust suffering? What sacrifices might God be calling you to make in order to make things right?
4. What forms of injustice do you observe around you? What is one local example of injustice that you want to learn more about? What first step might you take toward that end?
5. What could God do if you opened your heart and allowed what overflows from His heart to move freely in and through you on behalf of the broken and lost around you?

LEADER NOTES

CHURCH FAMILY MEETING | Join us for our next Church Family Meeting online at mcleanbible.org/churchfamilymeeting THIS WEDNESDAY, March 20, at 7:00 pm. During this meeting, we will have the opportunity to affirm new members, reaffirm two current elders, and share key developments concerning God's work in and through our church.

SECRET CHUCH 24 | Gather your church group and join us at MBC Tysons on April 19 for Secret Church, a unique, one-night, intensive time in prayer and God's Word with one of our Lead Pastors, David Platt. He will walk us word-by-word through the book of Ruth, we will learn about needs among the unreached, and we will pray together for the persecuted church around the world. Register [HERE](#) today to save your seats!