

# Nehemiah: *Building the Church One Person at a time*

(Nehemiah 5:1-19; Philippians 2:1-5)

“God’s Leaders Model Generosity”

Desperate people don’t usually make the best choices:

Times were challenging. Return from exile. Vulnerable. Mocked. Have little resources. Famine= hungry & hangry  
More so, the people of God did not have a heart for **God**. They had a heart for survival.

(A life w/o God is not worth living = cheap mere existence; Not life to the fullest; not meaningful reality)/no hope

## READ Nehemiah 5: 1-19

Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. <sup>2</sup> For there were those who said, “We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let’s get grain so that we may eat and live.” <sup>3</sup> And there were *others* who said, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses so that we might get grain **because of the famine.**” <sup>4</sup> There also were those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king’s tax *on* our fields and our vineyards. <sup>5</sup> And now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our children like their children. Yet behold, we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are forced into bondage *already*, and we are helpless because our fields and vineyards belong to others.”

<sup>6</sup> Then I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. <sup>7</sup> So I thought it over and contended with the nobles and the leading people, and said to them, “You are lending at interest, each to his brother!” [Ex. 22:25 “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him.” Leviticus 25:35-37: “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, **but fear your God**, that your brother may live beside you. You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for a profit.”]

Therefore, I held a great assembly against them. <sup>8</sup> And I said to them, “We, according to our ability, have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations; now would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us?” Then they were silent and could not find a word *to say*. (shame) <sup>9</sup> So I said, “The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the taunting of the nations, our enemies?”

**(Nehemiah’s example)**<sup>10</sup> And likewise I, my brothers, and my servants are lending them money and grain. Please, let’s do without this interest. <sup>11</sup> Please, give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, as well as the hundredth *part* of the money and of the grain, the new wine, and the oil that you are charging as interest from them.” <sup>12</sup> Then they said, “We will give *it* back and will require nothing from them; we will do exactly as you say.” -They watched Neh. leadership, example, His passion for Truth & love  
So I called the priests and made them (Jews) take an oath to act in accordance with this promise. <sup>13</sup> I also shook out the front of my garment and said, “So may God shake out every person from his house and from his possessions who does not keep this promise; just so may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said, “Amen!” And they praised the Lord. Then the people acted in accordance with this promise.

**Nehemiah notes that when God granted him leadership over Jerusalem as Governor, he led by example:**

-He did not take advantage of the people in his position (as others had done before him)

<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, since the day that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, for twelve years, neither I nor my kinsmen have eaten the governor’s food *allowance*....But I did not do so because of *my* fear of God. (=make the Jews be taxed twice)

-He was not lazy in his position, but he modeled a work ethic and passion for God’s glory in Jerusalem

<sup>16</sup> I also applied myself to the work on this wall; we did not buy any land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work.

-His reliance was on God’s favor and provision – not on what the people could provide (=God pleaser)

<sup>19</sup> Remember me, my God, for good, *in return* for all that I have done for this people

In contrast to Nehemiah, though the people banded together to build the wall, their heart had not been changed  
God’s people were acting selfishly and desperate. They were tearing down each other, looking out for their own interests, their own survival (=ruled by the flesh)

They were starving and scared and they took their eyes off of God, off of His provision and care.

**\*How did Nehemiah model generosity in His leadership? How did he lead by example in challenging times**

**As the Church, God has called us to serve one another through love.** =Family, Church, & Lost world/strangers

- The very definition of love (divine love) is the **sacrificing** for another w/o any expectation of gain
- Divine love is best exemplified when loving someone else (stranger) **costs** you something of yourself.
- This is what Jesus modeled to us, as the ultimate **Leader**, the Head of His Church – **He gave everything in love!**

**READ Phil. 2:1-5** “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. <sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

**As the Church, we are in a real sense “members of one another”** (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25).

- Our needing each other as being unique members/part of the same Body forms the basis for all true Christian community, and has a direct impact on our witness to the world
- John 13:35 “**by this the world will know you are MY disciples IF you love one another**”
- Love one another (**This command occurs at least 16 times**) - in the N.T. = 59 “one Anothers”

**AS the Church, what does God expect of you** (call you to) **toward His Church, His Bride? How are we to lead?**

- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Be likeminded towards one another (Romans 15:5)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16)
- Greet one another (Romans 16:16)
- Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13)
- Be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
- Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19)
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)
- Consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)
- Look to the interests of one another (Philippians 2:4)
- Bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)
- Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13)
- Stir up [provoke, stimulate] one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Peter 4:10)
- Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (1 Peter 5:5)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Confess your sins and faults to one another (James 5:16)

## **APPLICATION:**

- How do you know you are part of Christ's Body? As a true Member of His Body? What about this local church/Body**
- Do you know many people in this local church? 5-10-20? How well do you truly know them? Hurts/hopes/needs???**
- How is God growing you to learn to LOVE sacrificially toward His Church?** (faithful attendance, giving, serving, comm.)
- What is a next step of obedience for you to press in to more faithful ministry w/ this Local Body?
- PRAY that God will show you how you can best serve this local body w/ your life, love, service, willingness to honor God

### **Community Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think the returned exile Jews were taking advantage of other Jews during the famine?
2. How do you think (or actually see how) people in the Church today take advantage of other Believers?
3. Do you see that at the Well?
4. What did you notice in Vss. 14-19 how Nehemiah's leadership was distinctly different than the previous governors?
5. Of the 59 "one Anothers" passages in the New Testament, what are a few that are most needed in our community? Within our church? In your life, which one is God prompting you to embrace and practice now? Which of them do see you taking place regularly at the Well? In this community group?