



Midweek Study

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REBUILDING my BROKEN WORLD



Through Nehemiah

Surviving Selfishness

Nehemiah 5:1-19

Philippians 2:3-4 (NKJV) — **3** Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. **4** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

I. The CRISIS (v.1-4)

a. Famine

Nehemiah 5:3 (NKJV) — **3** There were also some who said, “We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine.”

b. Taxes

Nehemiah 5:4 (NKJV) — **4** There were also those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king’s tax on our lands and vineyards.

Rich Jewish brothers said, “How can I take advantage of this crisis?”

II. The COMPLAINT (v.5)

Nehemiah 5:5 (NKJV) — **5** Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards.”

Selfishness always causes conflict (see James 4:1)

Selfishness can stop the work of God! (It stopped Nehemiah, though momentarily.)

SELFISHNESS means “holding an attitude that people exist to meet my agenda, my wishes, and my needs. Therefore, the value of anything (people, church, God, etc...) is determined only in light of what they do for me.”^a

^a Quote from Stephen Davey

Proverbs 14:31 (NKJV) — 31 He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.

Exodus 22:25 (NKJV) — 25 “If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest.

III. **The CONFRONTATION (v. 6-9)**

1. **There was appropriate anger (v.6)** (see also Ephesians 4:26; Amos 5:21-24) Remember Jesus at the Temple (see John 2:14-17 and Matthew 21:12-13)
2. **He was thoughtful (v.7)** (see also James 1:19-20)
3. **He rebuked them privately (v.7)** (see also Matthew 18:15-17 and Titus 3:10-11)
4. **There was a public response (v.7-9)**

IV. **The CORRECTION (v.10-13)**

Nehemiah 5:10–13 (NKJV) — 10 I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, **let us stop this usury!** **11** Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them.” **12** So they said, “We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say.” **Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise.** **13** **Then I shook out the fold of my garment** and said, “So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied.” **And all the assembly said, “Amen!”** and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

1. **There was a determination to stop (v.10)**
2. **There was a plan to stop (v.11)**
3. **There was a vow to God and man to stop (v.12-13)**

V. **The CONTRAST (v.14-19)**

Contrast the selfish lenders with the selfless leader.

1. **He did not personally burden others (v.14)**
2. **He worked himself (v.16)**
3. **He was accountable to God (v. 19)**

In like manner, Jesus thought of our needs greater than His comforts or His desires. (see Phil. 2:5-8)