

Nehemiah: freenotfree

Week 4 – freedom comes from protecting

Transition: Last week we discussed the various ways that people tried to prevent Nehemiah from completing his divine task of rebuilding Jerusalem's outer walls. For instance, his enemies began their attack by first taunting him (and anyone who was involved with rebuilding the wall). But when that didn't work, they escalated to threatening, and then to stirring up internal dissension, and finally to devising an assassination attempt. Yet, because Nehemiah was convinced that this project was of and for God, he was neither distracted nor dissuaded. In fact, the wall was completed incredibly quickly (52 days).

Context: Nehemiah's battles are not merely coming from foreigners, however. Some of his fiercest battles actually came from his own people. Although there are various reasons for this, there is one worth mentioning. Namely, during the Babylonian captivity the Jews no longer had their own king, and the priests no longer had a temple. In short, for 70 years the people suffered from a severe lack of godly leadership. When Nehemiah finally made it on the scene, the Jews had been released and living in their homeland for almost 100 years. And even though the temple had been rebuilt for almost 70 years, the Jews were still like sheep without a shepherd.

Opening Question:

- What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the word *family*? To you, what are the best and worst aspects of family?
- Have you ever had to confront anyone in your family about something? What was that like for you? Confronting family members over difficult issues is something many people struggle doing. Why do you think that is?

Scripture/Storing: Nehemiah 5

Discipleship Questions:

- What is going on that causes Nehemiah to get very angry (5:1-6)? Why do you think Nehemiah's anger is so severe? Do you think his anger is righteous? Explain.
- What do you think might provoke Nehemiah's ire against the family of God today?
- What all does Nehemiah do to resolve the situation (5:7-13)? And how does it turn out?
- What do you think it means that he "took counsel with himself?" Why is this an important first step?
- What else does Nehemiah do to remedy the situation (5:14-19)?
- When has a leader motivated you by their own example? Share the story. How did it impact you? Why is leadership by example so powerful? When have you led by example? (Share the story.)
- Think of a time when Jesus led by example. What is the story? How did it affect His followers? How has it affected you?
- The phrase "the fear of God" is used twice in the passage. What does it mean and how does it change everything once that it's considered and practiced? What happens in our relationships when we do not fear God?