

**DEEP WATERS MEN'S DISCIPLESHIP-LEADERSHIP TRAINING**  
**Lesson Five: Attacks from Within**  
**Nehemiah 5:1-19**

**Opening Discussion Question: When there is more month left at the end of the money, what do you decide to do without?**

This chapter reveals an internal problem: hunger, exploitation; the very foundation of Jewish community life was at risk.

Verse 1: Both men and women were involved in this protest

Verse 2 - One of the problems was that the people were now working on the walls instead of working on their little farm plot. And, "you can't eat walls."

**I think there is a problem here with balance. We constantly are struggling in the Church to find the right balance. When Israel had first returned to the land from captivity, they soon lost interest in rebuilding the city, and focused with enthusiasm on their own lives - their own businesses, their own farms. Pendulum swings in one direction. Then Nehemiah comes along and the people get excited about building the walls. Pendulum swings in another direction. Where is the balance?**

Verse 4: It was estimated that the Persian king collected nearly \$100,000,000 in taxes each year; very little of this was returned to the people because it was melted down into bullion and placed into the king's vault.

So here is the problem:

1. Normal work to sustain life was stopped
2. Some had mortgaged what they owned in order to get food to live
3. Others had borrowed money to pay their taxes
4. Some had been forced to sell their children into slavery in order to "make ends meet" (Real problem: it was other Jews who were taking advantage of these misfortunate Jews)

Verse 6: Now it was Nehemiah's turn to show anger

Examples of Jesus showing anger:

Mark 3:5 - He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

John 2:14 - In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

2 Corinthians 11:29 – Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? (words of the Apostle Paul)

Verse 7: “I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges” – Nehemiah brought legal proceedings

**1. He reflected upon the matter; hasty reactions only exacerbate the problem – Principle One**

How often do we respond in haste? We fail to even get all the facts. We quickly jump to conclusions. Then we rush into judgments that we often regret.

Let us learn this lesson from Nehemiah: THINK BEFORE YOU ACT  
Hear your son’s side of the story  
Listen to your wife’s position

People were behaving like pawn-brokers (Kidner) – They had wrongful motivations

According to the Old Testament Law you could demand some type of pledge against a loan:

Deuteronomy 24:10–13 – When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into his house to get what he is offering as a pledge. Stay outside and let the man to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. If the man is poor, do not go to sleep with his pledge in your possession. Return his cloak to him by sunset so that he may sleep in it. Then he will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the LORD your God.

But when times were bad, the rules were to be relaxed.

**2. He confronted those who had perpetrated the problem – Principle Two**

Nehemiah did not “sweep it under the rug.” He confronted the problem head on, after he had done his homework.

Quote from Josephus: “Let it not be permitted to lend upon usury to any Hebrew either meat or drink; for it is not just to draw a revenue from the misfortunes of a fellow countryman. Rather, in consoling him in his distress, you should reckon as gain the gratitude of such persons and the recompense that God has in store for an act of generosity.” (Antiquities 4.8.25)

Verse 9: An appeal to higher motives – serving God!

Verse 10: Nehemiah sets the example – We are lending people money but with no interest being charged.

Verse 12: A positive response by the people

**Why did they respond this way? It was because they observed the example in Nehemiah's life.**

**I see two common problems in these verses:**

- 1. Compassion fatigue – so much tragedy around us; where do we begin**
- 2. Indignation fatigue – where is our anger; we have become indifferent and apathetic**

Verses 14–19 – Example of Nehemiah's leadership during a difficult time

Remember: People have become impoverished

Money is tight

Nerves are fraying around the edges

Here comes Nehemiah, now newly appointed as the governor. With that position came lots of privileges and perks:

Central among them was the privilege of a food allowance

Also privilege of collecting special taxes to support your lifestyle as a governor

And, these privileges extended to those employed by the governor

Nehemiah refuses such privileges. Why?

1. He had a reverence for God – Nehemiah 5:15b
2. He had compassion on his fellow countrymen – Nehemiah 5:18

Five traits of Nehemiah (Campbell)

1. Capacity for moral indignation
2. Compassion for the oppressed
3. Concern for social justice
4. Courage to denounce evil, even when rich and influential men were involved.
5. Consciousness of the fact that he labored for the approval of God and not of men.

**Homework Assignment: Nehemiah shows us that loving God and others may require personal sacrifice.**

- 1. What privileges and/or rights are you willing to give up so that the work of Christ can be advanced? Or another person helped?**
- 2. Visit with your family about your choice.**
- 3. How can you give leadership in this area?**