

# When Issues Arise

## Nehemiah 5-6

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Honest

### Reflect

Outline: Recap

### Realize

Points to Ponder

### Respond

Questions to draw out understanding.

## REFLECT

When God moves in power, it has nothing to do with our own ideas of power structures and what they look like. In fact, when God moves in power, it has everything to do with elevating the powerless and meeting the needs of the marginalized and oppressed, so they can be free too. One of our most important callings as followers of Jesus is to carry on his work of caring for the oppressed—this was one of Nehemiah’s most important contributions in the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

## [LINK to SMALL GROUP VIDEO MATERIALS](#)

## REALIZE

### 1. Active engagement crushes opposition.

- **Nehemiah 5:1-13**
- **Ephesians 4:26**
- **Leader Notes**
  - Nehemiah heard of the oppression of his people—oppression from other Jews!—and he became very angry after he reflected on it. Now, anger itself is not a sin. (No emotion, in and of itself, is sin). That’s why Paul says in Ephesians 4:26, “Be angry, and do not sin.” There’s a way to channel your anger toward justice and a way to channel it toward hatred and violence, when it becomes sin. But even God gets angry, especially when people use the vulnerability of others as an opportunity to exploit them for unjust gain. God hates that.
  - Nehemiah’s righteous anger drives him to righteous action. He steps in on behalf of the oppressed people in his community. When he called out those who were doing wrong, they responded and did the right thing.
  - If we really love people, we will call them out when we need to. And we will accept with humility when someone calls us out.
- **Describe either a previous or current example where you’ve seen oppression and injustice even within the people of God. What did it make you feel? What is the appropriate response for you to take action without sin?**

### 2. Sacrifice for the common good.

- **Nehemiah 5:14-19**
- **Luke 22:26-27**
- **Leader Notes**

- While Nehemiah governed Jerusalem, he didn't take the amount of compensation that would typically be given to a governor. With so many of his people experiencing hardship, Nehemiah didn't want to live far above them. He was a man of principle!
- Jesus instructed his followers to lead in this same way in Luke 22:26-27. Jesus led by example: he is the ultimate servant-leader, who gave up everything to join us in our weakness.
- **Where do you need to lead the people God's entrusted to you by serving them? How can you die to your own self-interests this week?**

### 3. Expose the lies.

- **Nehemiah 6:1-14**
- **Leader Notes**
  - Our enemy, Satan, is the father of all lies. Deception is his primary tactic to keep people from truly knowing and following the Lord. Sometimes those lies come through other people, and sometimes they come from the enemy himself in the little whispers we hear in our minds to distrust who God says he is and we are.
  - Like Nehemiah, we have to call out the lies and proclaim the truth. Prayer is our best defense in the face of Satan's deception. When we are confident God will work out justice in our lives, we don't have to defend ourselves—the Lord will do it.
- **What lies about God are prevalent in our culture today? What lies about God are prevalent in our congregations today? What lies are you believing about God and yourself? Spend some time writing these things down and praying through them by yourself or in your group.**

### 4. Keep working until the work is done.

- **Nehemiah 6:15-19**
- **Galatians 6:9**
- **Leader Notes**
  - Another of the enemy's greatest tactics is to get us to quit showing up when something is *almost* finished. Nehemiah's leadership of the people of Israel carried through until the work was completely finished.
  - On a practical level, that meant the work that God had commanded them to do got done. But that also served as a testimony that inspired fear in the hearts of the enemies of God, the people who were seeking to derail God's work.
- **Is there any part of the work God's given you that you've left unfinished? What has God called you to, and how can you keep pushing into that calling?**

### Optional Follow-up Questions:

- What makes you say that?
- How do you feel about that?
- How would you explain your answer to a non-Christian friend or neighbor?
- Why did God design it to work that way? Why not just do (whatever else) instead?
- What would you say to someone who disagrees with that?
- Why do we really have to do it like that? Why can't we just go (some other route) instead?