

## Nehemiah 5:1-13

### Week 5 - Prayer For The Poor

#### Nehemiah Helps The Poor

##### Nehemiah 5:1-13

<sup>1</sup> Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews. <sup>2</sup> Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.”

<sup>3</sup> Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.”

<sup>4</sup> Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards. <sup>5</sup> Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.”

<sup>6</sup> When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. <sup>7</sup> I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, “You are charging your own people interest!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them <sup>8</sup> and said: “As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!” They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

<sup>9</sup> So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? <sup>10</sup> I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest! <sup>11</sup> Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.”

<sup>12</sup> “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.”

Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. <sup>13</sup> I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!” At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.



What is the outcry referenced in verse 6 and why did this make Nehemiah so angry?

*Possible answers: Their people were going hungry, being enslaved, being charged interest, etc. Nehemiah was outraged by the greed and injustice shown.*



This section of Nehemiah reminds us that God cares for the vulnerable. Who comes to mind when we talk about “the vulnerable”?

*Possible answers: widows, orphans, refugees, outcast, minorities, unborn, people without power or protection.*



Share a time you personally extended God’s love to someone considered “vulnerable”. What was your motivation?

*Possible answers: packed food with Feed My Starving Children, helped a neighbor with yard work, brought a meal to a grieving family, gave some spare cash to the man standing on the corner, etc.*

? Optional question: Do you find it easy to care for vulnerable people or is this a challenge for you?

? Why is this important to Nehemiah and God?

*Possible answers: All people were created to be image-bearers of God (Genesis 1:27), God cares for all people (John 3:16, Romans 5:8), God doesn't like people taking advantage of others (Leviticus 25: 35-38, Romans 12:17-21), or putting themselves in the place of God (idolatry - Exodus 20, Colossians 3:5)*

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Matthew 25:40, 45

? Optional question: Has there been a time when you were the "vulnerable" one and others were able to extend care to you? Share about what you experienced and how you felt.

## A Heart Condition

**Read out loud: The other idea of vulnerability draws us into the condition of our hearts. Am I being honest and open with others, including God? Where do I need support?**

### 1 John 1:8-9

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

### Psalm 139

<sup>1</sup> You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

<sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

<sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

<sup>4</sup> Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

<sup>5</sup> You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

<sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

<sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

<sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

<sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

<sup>11</sup> If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

<sup>12</sup> even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

**?** Why is it important that we see ourselves as vulnerable in Christ? What's at stake if we don't?

*Possible answers: Christ is the ultimate "caregiver" - we need him as Savior! He offers us forgiveness when we confess our sins. He knows our thoughts already. We weren't created just to help others with tangible needs here on earth. Yes, this is important, but we also need to help point others to him.*

*Dangers could include: we are viewed as our own "saviors". We get to decide who is vulnerable or not. We can always remain the victim. Our identity/purpose is connected to how well we care for other vulnerable people. We care for others apart from the gospel.*

### **For Discussion and Accountability**

**?** Are you being vulnerable with God and others, to allow God to work in your life?

**?** What can you pray for God to "search and know" in your heart this week? How can your small group support you in this prayer this week?