

## Ethical Vision!

### Nehemiah 5

1 There was a widespread outcry from the people and their wives against their Jewish countrymen. 2 Some were saying, "We, our sons, and our daughters are numerous. Let us get grain so that we can eat and live." 3 Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, vineyards, and homes to get grain during the famine." 4 Still others were saying, "We have borrowed money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. 5 We and our children are just like our countrymen and their children, yet we are subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters are already enslaved, but we are powerless because our fields and vineyards belong to others."

6 I became extremely angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints. 7 After seriously considering the matter, I accused the nobles and officials, saying to them, "Each of you is charging his countrymen interest." So I called a large assembly against them 8 and said, "We have done our best to buy back our Jewish countrymen who were sold to foreigners, but now you sell your own countrymen, "and we have to buy them back." They remained silent and could not say a word. 9 Then I said, "What you are doing isn't right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God and not invite the reproach of our foreign enemies? 10 Even I, as well as my brothers and my servants, have been lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop charging this interest. 11 Return their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and houses to them immediately, along with the percentage of the money, grain, new wine, and fresh oil I that you have been assessing them." 12 They responded: "We will return these things and require nothing more from them. We will do as you say."

So I summoned the priests and made everyone take an oath to do this. 13 I also shook the folds of my robe and said, "May God likewise shake from his house and property everyone who doesn't keep this promise. May he be shaken out and have nothing!"

The whole assembly said, "Amen," and they praised the LORD. Then the people did as they had promised.

"14 Furthermore, from the day King Artaxerxes appointed me to be their governor in the land of Judah — from the twentieth year until his thirty-second year, twelve years — I and my associates never ate from the food allotted to the governor. 15 The governors who preceded me had heavily burdened the people, taking from them food and wine as well as a pound of silver. Their subordinates also oppressed the people, but because of the fear of God, I didn't do this. 16 Instead, I devoted myself to the construction of this wall, and all my subordinates were gathered there for the work. We didn't buy any land.

17 There were 150 Jews and officials, as well as guests from the surrounding nations at my table. 18 Each day, one ox, six choice sheep, and some fowl were prepared for me. An abundance of all kinds of wine was provided every ten days. But I didn't demand the food allotted to the governor, because the burden on the people was so heavy.

19 Remember me favorably, my God, for all that I have done for this people.

#### I. The victims outcry:

1 **There was a widespread outcry** from the people and their wives against their Jewish countrymen. 2 Some were saying, "We, our sons, and our daughters are numerous. Let us get grain so that we can eat and live."

3 Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, vineyards, and homes to get grain during the famine."

4 Still others were saying, "We have borrowed money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. 5 We and our children are just like our countrymen and their children, yet we are subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters are already enslaved, but we are powerless because our fields and vineyards belong to others."

An American is sexually assaulted every two minutes, totaling an average of nearly 238,000 individuals over 12 years of age each year, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. And the Crimes Against Children Research Center estimates that one in five girls and one in twenty boys will be a victim of sexual abuse in their lifetimes. These assaults leave behind a lifetime of psychological damage.

1. "Jewish countryman" Abuse arising from your own tribe is especially painful.

Psalm 55:12-13

*"12 Now it is not an enemy who insults me —  
otherwise I could bear it;  
it is not a foe who rises up against me —  
otherwise I could hide from him.  
13 But it is you, a man who is my peer,  
my companion and good friend! m"*

1. "Eat and live" The victims were not asking for frivolous assistance. It was a matter of life and death.
2. "Subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery" Children have become commodities.
3. "We are powerless" Financial exploitation

## **II. Nehemiah's accusation:**

*6 I became extremely angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints. 7 After seriously considering the matter, I **accused the nobles and officials**, saying to them, "Each of you is charging his countrymen interest." So I called a large assembly against them 8 and said, "We have done our best to buy back our Jewish countrymen who were sold to foreigners, but now you sell your own countrymen, "and we have to buy them back."*

1. "Extremely angry" Nehemiah's righteous indignation.
2. "Seriously considered" Nehemiah thoroughly pondered his accusation.

Psalm 4:4

*4 Be angry and do not sin;  
on your bed, reflect in your heart and be still.*

Nehemiah put his HEART and his HEAD together.

Most likely Nehemiah with all the resistance must have thought, “Things were a whole lot better in the Castle in Susa.” The wall didn’t cause the problem, it revealed the problems.

1. “Accused the nobles and officials” Nehemiah stood up and spoke up to powerful people.

The impact of the offense and the breadth of the awareness should be reflected in the scope of the confrontation.

### **III. Nehemiah’s verdict:**

*8b They remained silent and could not say a word. 9 Then I said, “**What you are doing isn’t right.** Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God and not invite the reproach of our foreign enemies? 10 Even I, as well as my brothers and my servants, have been lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop charging this interest. 11 Return their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and houses to them immediately, along with the percentage of the money, grain, new wine, and fresh oil I that you have been assessing them.”*

1. “What you are doing isn’t right” Nehemiah had an ethical standard for evaluation.

Oswald Chambers. “When you fear God, you fear nothing else; if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.”

**When determining how scriptures apply to us, it is important to first determine what principals are introduced.**

1. A key biblical **concern for the development of the community (Israel) not just increasing individual wealth.** One could not lend within the community with an interest rate attached. However, outside of the community one could charge interest.
2. Someone else’s poverty or difficulty should not become an economic opportunity for us.
3. As a compassionate action, the lender should **consider the situation of the borrower** as much as she considers her own situation.
4. When it comes to **collateral one cannot hold an item deemed necessary for survival.**
5. Lending practices should **reflect the compassionate nature of God.**

[moneyhelpforchristians.com](http://moneyhelpforchristians.com). By Craig Ford

### **Artistotle on interest:**

The most hated sort [of moneymaking], and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural use of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest. And this term Usury which means the birth of money

from money, is applied to the breeding of money, because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of all modes of making money this is the most unnatural. Quoted by Yaron Brook.

1. "I, as well as my brothers and my servants" Nehemiah had disciples who followed his example.

Leviticus 25:35-38

*35 "If your brother becomes destitute and cannot sustain himself among you, you are to support him as an alien or temporary resident, so that he can continue to live among you. 36 Do not profit or take interest from him, but fear your God and let your brother live among you. 37 You are not to lend him your silver with interest or sell him your food for profit. 38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God."*

How can we have hope that the Christian faith is lived consistently with holy scripture 10 years 100 years or 1000 years from now??

Leslie Shively interview:

1. How did you get involved in Relational Discipleship?
2. What brings you the greatest joy as a disciple maker?
3. What advice would you give to men and women who are considering participation in RD?

Praise for 245 text responses two weeks ago and 50 people attended RD Training last week. However, that means there are still plenty of people who have not responded that could be experiencing what Leslie and her RD Group experienced.

1. "Stop charging this interest" Nehemiah gave clear direction.

#### **IV. The abusers response:**

*12 They responded: "We will return these things and require nothing more from them. We will do as you say."*

1. "We will return" The abusers restoration.
2. "Require nothing more" The abusers repentance.
3. "Will do as you say" The abusers resolve.

I'm told that when a group of thoroughbred horses face an enemy attack, they stand in a circle facing each other, and with their back legs, kick out at the foe. Donkeys, on the other hand, do just the opposite. They make a circle and face the threat while using their hind legs to kick at each other!

#### **V. The people's promise:**

*So I summoned the priests and made everyone take an oath to do this. 13 I also shook the folds of my robe and said, "May God likewise shake from his house and property everyone who doesn't keep this promise. May he be shaken out and have nothing!"*

*The whole assembly said, "Amen," and they praised the LORD. **Then the people did as they had promised.***

1. "Take an oath" The people made a commitment to both man and God.
2. "Praised the Lord" Everyone celebrated God's intervention.
3. "The people did as they had promised." The people changed.