Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

18 August 2013 Message 6 of 15

NLT 30 Minutes

**The Cry of the Poor**

Title

***Nehemiah 5***

**Topic:** Compassion

**Subject:** How should we help the poor?

**Complement:** Fight greed.

**Purpose:** The listeners will show compassion for the poor instead of greed.

# Introduction

### Interest: Dealing with poverty is not easy.

Poverty

#### How do you respond to beggars on the street? Whatever you do, don’t make eye contact!

#### What do you do with emails that request money? Regular emails come to me on the CIC website from Pakistan, Nigeria, Cameroon, etc. I struggle with how to respond to them in a godly manner.

#### This really comes home when the poor has a name––someone who you live with, work with, study with, or even attend church with.

### Need: Do you help the poor? Should you? Why? How?

• Do you?

### Subject: How should we help the poor?

How?

#### What’s the best way to help them rather than hurt them?

#### I was given this book entitled *When Helping Hurts* to show me how best to really help the poor rather than hurting them!

• Hurts

### Background: Today we continue our Nehemiah series on “Rebuilding Broken Dreams.”

Series Slide

#### Nehemiah has been helping the Jews rebuild their dreams, and up to Nehemiah 4, the challenge to rebuilding Jerusalem’s broken wall has been external opposition.

Enemies

“Build!”

##### Nehemiah 4 showed that their external enemies had just ridiculed the wall builders, saying that a little fox could break down their wall (4:3).

Fox

##### Even under threat of bodily harm and death (4:8), Nehemiah led them to build the wall to half its height (4:10).

Guard

##### We learned that we should, like Nehemiah, respond to external discouragement and danger with God-dependent *prayer*, God-informed *planning*, and God-empowered *action*.

Internal

Neh. 4 MI

#### The external threats switch to internal issues with the poor in Nehemiah 5.

• Arrows

##### We don't only face *external* opposition in our service to the King.

##### The more difficult threats to God’s plan are *internal*––they come within our own ranks. These are often directed at leaders, as is happening in Pakistan now.

Pakistan

##### Nehemiah was a construction manager, but even more important, he was a man of prayer––and compassion for the poor. Of the various types of internal problems, one of the most insidious ones relates to *money.*

• Poor

• Prayer

Construct

##### It is inevitable that a congregation like ours will have people of varying socio-economic levels. But how do we respond to this?

### Preview: Today we will first see how Nehemiah helped the poor and then how we should do the same.

• II

I

(The entire chapter 5 teaches us that...)

# I. Nehemiah helped the poor by fighting greed in others and in his own life (5:1-19).

MPI

[He used his influence to benefit the disadvantaged rather than benefit himself.]

## The problem: A famine enabled wealthy Jews to take advantage of poorer Jews (5:1-5).

Prob

### The problem was internal as it related to fellow Jews (1).

1-5

### It addressed the basic need of food (2).

### The people’s solution was threefold (3-5).

• 3

#### Some mortgaged their fields (3).

• 4

#### Others borrowed money at 12% annual interest (4).

#### Still others even sold their children as slaves (5).

• 5

### This greed made Nehemiah angry (6).

• 6

### Do YOU get angry? Not even at the right things to be angry about?

Angry?

### We face similar greed that causes poverty in Asia today.

Hard #

#### Nearly half of Asia's 1.27 billion children live in poverty — deprived of food, safe drinking water, health or shelter.

• 1.27

#### While 600 million children under the age of 18 lack access to one of these basic human needs, more than 350 million are deprived of two or more of these needs.

• 600

#### South Asia has the highest rates of malnutrition and the largest numbers of undernourished children in the world!

• S. A.

## The solution: Nehemiah fought greed with both public rebuke and personal example (5:6-19).

Solution

### He publicly rebuked the perpetrators and made them promise to restore what they had taken in greed (6-13).

#### He was very angry after hearing their cries (6).

• 6

#### He confronted the wealthy leaders with their greed (7-8).

• 8

Greed

• 7

#### He held them accountable to restore fields and repay interest (9-11)

SPs

• 9-11

#### He warned of God’s judgment on those who broke their promise (12-13).

Impact

• 12-13

### He set an example of generosity and expected this of his men (5:14-19).

#### He and his officials refused their food allowances (14-15).

14-15

#### He and his servants built the wall instead of buying land (16).

16

#### He fed over 150 people daily from his own pocket to ease the people’s burden (17-18).

17-18

19

#### He looked to God instead of man for his reward (19).

MPI

(So we’ve seen that Nehemiah helped the poor by fighting greed. But how should *we* help the poor?)

# II. Help the poor by fighting greed.

MPII

[Bless those with less money than you by combating selfish tendencies.]

## Help others be generous.

Others

### One church had over $3 million in the bank and yet required their pastor to pay for his own mobile phone that they required him to have so they could get ahold of him. I sought to stand up for him to the board.

Choices

### Some church members gave their maid the leftovers off their children’s plates. I preached about this from the pulpit!

Yourself

## Be generous yourself.

### Nehemiah set the example here.

Neh Ex

### One CIC member invested S$65,000 in India for land, a school, and a church building.

India

### Mr. Miles cared for the poor (me!)

Miles

### Friends are paying for Kim’s mother to fly to Singapore for their grandbaby’s delivery.

• Kim

### This is why God has worked on my heart to minister to poor pastors in 12 countries.

Map

### This is why I run my website at biblestudydownloads.com—to offer biblical teaching for free for those who can’t pay, beginning in English and then translated into 35 languages.

Susan

BSD-5 slides

### This is why Susan pours herself into student wives from the poorer nations.

### This is why my 3 internet courses through the whole Bible are now available for free at Internet Biblical Seminary for those who cannot afford to go to seminary.

IBS

Subj.

(How can we sum up this entire passage? We began with this question: How should we help the poor?)

# Conclusion

MI

### Replace greed with generosity (MI).

You

### What practical ways can *you* be generous with the poor?

#### Admit past patterns of abuse.

• Admit

#### Choose to change.

• Choose

#### Use your position for positive impact.

• Use

• Mktpl

#### Have a marketplace ministry.

### What practical ways can *we* be generous with the poor?

Hear

#### Let’s start at home: Care for those struggling financially in our congregation.

#### Let’s never go below our commitment to give at least 20% of offerings outside of Singapore!

20%

#### Let’s support ministries like PTI in Manipur, India, where we just gave $3000 for solar panels.

PTI (5 slides)

#### Let’s help Lakeside Family Services by supporting Albina: backing Themshang and attending the 30 Aug fundraiser.

Dinner

LFS

### What *one way* can you be generous?

1 way?

### Prayer

Black

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### Nehemiah 4 showed that their external enemies had just confronted the builders of the wall with ridicule, saying that a little fox could break down their wall (4:3).

### Even under threat of bodily harm and death (4:8), Nehemiah led them to build the wall to half its height (4:10).

### We learned that we should, like Nehemiah, respond to external discouragement and danger with God-dependent *prayer*, God-informed *planning*, and God-empowered *action*.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### We don't only face *external* opposition in our service to the King.

### The more difficult threats to God’s plan are *internal*––they come within our own ranks.

### Of the various types of internal problems, one of the most insidious ones relates to *money.*

### It is inevitable that a congregation like ours will have people of varying socio-economic levels. But how do we respond to this?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Jesus said, “You will always have the poor among you.”

### Since poverty is unavoidable, God sought to control poverty in the land with laws of compassion.

#### One such law was when God told the Jews never to sell their land permanently outside their family. Leviticus 25:25, “If one of your fellow Israelites falls into poverty and is forced to sell some family land, then a close relative should buy it back for him. 26 If there is no close relative to buy the land, but the person who sold it gets enough money to buy it back, 27 he then has the right to redeem it from the one who bought it. The price of the land will be discounted according to the number of years until the next Year of Jubilee. In this way the original owner can then return to the land” (NLT).

#### Another law prevented wealthy Jews from going back over their land after harvest to get the remaining sheaves. ““When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop” (Lev. 19:9).

#### Another one prohibited landowners to harvest the corners of their crops so the poor could harvest there without shame. ““When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. Leave it for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I am the LORD your God” (Lev. 23:22 NLT).

# Questions

### What was the real problem here––poverty from neglect or just dire circumstances? It was the latter:

#### Large families was considered an asset back then––until there was a famine (5:2-3)!

#### Excessive taxes ate away any profits (5:4).

#### It was so desperate that some even sold their children into slavery to pay others of their own family (5:5)!

#### Charging even 1% interest to fellow Jews violated the law (5:7a, 10). BKC says it was 1% per month!

### Why did Nehemiah deal with the problem publicly rather than privately (5:7b)? Public sin requires public rebuke (cf. 1 Tim. 5:20).

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Deal with internal problems

Don’t ignore the cry of the poor

# Possible Illustrations

### Bad examples

#### One church had over $3 million in the bank and yet required their pastor to pay for his own mobile phone that they required him to have so they could get ahold of him.

#### Some church members gave their maid the leftovers off their children’s plates.

#### Regular emails to the CIC website from Pakistan

### Good examples

#### Mr. Miles cared for the poor (me!)

#### One CIC member invested S$65,000 in India for land, a school, and a church building.

#### Friends are paying for Kim’s mother to fly to Singapore for their grandbaby’s delivery.

#### Susan and I figure the exact percentage of our income that we spend on others and ourselves each month.

# Possible Applications

### Let’s start at home: Care for those struggling financially in our congregation.

### Let’s never go below our commitment to give at least 20% of offerings outside of Singapore!

### Let’s help Lakeside Family Centre (Albina & Themshang)

**The Cry of the Poor**

***Nehemiah 5***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The response of Nehemiah to greedy Jews taking advantage of the poor was both public rebuke and personal example.

# I. The problem of famine enabled wealthy Jews to take advantage of poorer Jews (5:1-5).

## The problem was internal as it related to fellow Jews (1).

## It addressed the basic need of food (2).

## The people’s solution was threefold (3-5).

### Some mortgaged their fields (3).

### Others borrowed money at 12% annual interest (4).

### Still others even sold their children as slaves (5).

# II. The response of Nehemiah to their greed was both public rebuke and personal example (5:6-19).

## He publicly rebuked the perpetrators and made them promise to restore what they had taken in greed (6-13).

### He was very angry after hearing their cries (6).

### He confronted the wealthy leaders with their greed (7-8).

### He held them accountable to restore fields and repay interest (9-11)

### He warned of God’s judgment on those who broke their promise (12-13).

## He set an example of generosity and expected this of his men (5:14-19).

### He and his officials refused their food allowances (14-15).

### He and his servants built the wall instead of buying land (16).

### He fed over 150 people daily from his own pocket to ease the people’s burden (17-18).

### He looked to God instead of man for his reward (19).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will show compassion for the poor instead of greed.

**Homiletical Outline** (Simple inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Dealing with poverty is not easy.

### Need: Do you help the poor? Should you? Why? How?

### Subject: How should we help the poor?

### Background: Challenges to building Jerusalem’s wall switch from external opposition to internal issues with the poor in Nehemiah 5.

### Preview: Today we will first see how Nehemiah helped the poor and then how we should do the same.

# I. Nehemiah helped the poor by fighting greed in others and in his own life (5:1-19).

## The problem: A famine enabled wealthy Jews to take advantage of poorer Jews (5:1-5).

### The problem was internal as it related to fellow Jews (1).

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## The solution: Nehemiah fought greed with both public rebuke and personal example (5:6-19).

### He publicly rebuked the perpetrators and made them promise to restore what they had taken in greed (6-13).

### He set an example of generosity and expected this of his men (5:14-19).

# II. Help the poor by fighting greed.

[Bless those with less money than you by combating selfish tendencies.]

## Help others be generous.

## Be generous yourself.

# Conclusion

### Replace greed with generosity (MI).

### What practical ways can we be generous with the poor?

### What *one way* can you replace greed with compassion?

### Prayer



**Rick Griffith**

18 August 2013

*Message 6 of 15*

**The Cry of the Poor**

***Nehemiah 5***

# Introduction

### Dealing with poverty is not easy.

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ should we help the poor?

# I. Nehemiah helped the poor by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in others and in his own life (5:1-19).

## The problem: A famine enabled wealthy Jews to take advantage of poorer Jews (1-5).

### The problem was internal as it related to fellow Jews (1).

### It addressed the basic need of food (2).

### The people’s solution was threefold (3-5).

#### Some mortgaged their fields (3).

#### Others borrowed money at 12% annual interest (4).

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## The solution: Nehemiah fought greed with both public rebuke and personal example (6-19).

### He publicly rebuked the perpetrators and made them promise to restore what they had taken in greed (6-13).

### He set an example of generosity and expected this of his men (14-19).

# II. Help the poor by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

## Help \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ be generous.

## Be generous \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

# Conclusion

### Replace \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Main Idea).

### What practical ways can we be generous with the poor?

### What *one way* can you replace greed with compassion?

**Home Group Questions:**

1. Read Nehemiah 5 aloud. Contrast Nehemiah’s actions with most leaders (politicians, pastors, para-church leaders, etc.):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Nehemiah (which verse?)** | **Other Leaders** |
| Accessible to the common people (1) | Ivory tower lifestyles |
| Heard the complaints (6a) | Don’t listen to subordinates |
| Got angry about injustice (6b) | Get angry about their own rights violated |
| Not reactionary (7a) | Decisions off the cuff |
| Not afraid of powerful people (7b) | Kissing up to people of influence |
| Confronted sin publicly (7c) | Brush sin under the carpet |
| Called a public meeting (7d) | Don’t want injustice to go public |
| Took no pay to be above reproach (14) | Exorbitant salaries |
| Not afraid to get his hands dirty (16a) | White collar lifestyle only |
| Didn’t buy land to avoid blame (16b) | Own vast estates |
| Expected subordinates to work (16c) | Subordinates get a free ride |
| Hospitality at his expense (17-18) | Government lavishes on VIPs |
| Compassion for the poor (18b) | Help only their friends |
| Expected reward only from God (19) | Reward themselves only now |

1. What people do you know who have been the best examples of generosity? How?

Others generally do not know these people!

Ed Sheffield gave me his son’s car at my college graduation

A Singaporean man recently gave part of his liver to a stranger

Text

1. What poor people can you help in a practical way? How?

CIC can support the training of Nepali students of Ananda