

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you see injustice in the world? Where do you see injustice in the Church community?
2. Reflect on some of the ways the church community is called to relate to one another differently than others might relate to one another in the world. (Example: Called to forgiveness instead of revenge)
3. Is there something you are doing that is permissible, but not beneficial? Could the Holy Spirit be calling you to give that up in order to fully honor Him?

Prayer for Those Searching for Truth:

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open me to the reality of who you are. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent and convincing, and that leads to the life you promise. Amen.

Prayer of Belief:

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever dared admit, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt on the cross, taking what I deserved in order to offer me complete forgiveness. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Amen.



Nehemiah 5:1-13
November 8, 2015

The Setting

In Nehemiah 5, we enter a world where famine has left some people with no choice but to mortgage their land and homes in order to feed their families and buy next years seed.

The loans were being provided by the more wealthy members of the community, but with significant interest charges. This led to a situation where families were having to pledge their land, home, and in extreme cases, give their sons and daughters to debt slavery just to make ends meet.

In a word, injustice was happening among God's people.

NOTES:

The Response

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? - Nehemiah 5:9 (NIV)

Nehemiah responds to the injustice by asking that the community walk in the fear of the LORD in their life together.

It's as though Nehemiah was saying, "We aren't going to govern ourselves by what is 'legal' or commonly expected. We are going to govern ourselves by what honors God."

The practices were changed to help end the injustice.

NOTES:

New Wall | New Community

This side-story in Nehemiah 5 shows us that the rebuilding project wasn't just about building a wall to protect a city, it was about rebuilding a people. It was about calling God's people to be a new kind of community.

This is what the way of Jesus is all about! Jesus established a new community called the Church. It is a community formed around Christ that is called to embody the way of the kingdom of God.

This means that we are not to relate to one another along common cultural lines of separation and unity, but rather relate to one another in a way that honors God in all things.

May we be a new kind of community that works against injustice and aligns ourselves with the justice of God. May we rightly relate to Christ as King, and rightly relate to others in our community!

NOTES:

Prayer

Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer, p. 260)