

NEHEMIAH

The Restoration of God's People

Sermon 04: “Resolving Conflicts from Within”

Scripture: [Nehemiah 5: 1-19](#)

Theme: *In order to do the Lord's Work, we must resolve conflicts in the church in a biblical manner.*

This week we see opposition come to Nehemiah again. Unlike the previous times, it is no longer coming from the government; it is coming from within the community of Jews. Some of the circumstances before them that caused this opposition are:

- A lack of rain along with failure of the crops was causing a famine
- The taxation from the government¹
- The wealthier Jews were taking advantage of those who were less off. This then reduced some of them to a desperate state of slavery.

Nehemiah, having become angry, quickly calms and readies himself and then steps in and has some stern words with the officials and nobles.² Being a godly Old Testament man Nehemiah probably had [Exodus 22:25](#), [Leviticus 25: 35-41](#), or [Deuteronomy 23:19](#) running through his head when we hear about this injustice. While the [Matthew 18](#) principle did not explicitly exist back in Nehemiah's time, he certainly exhibited this trait. He went straight to the source that was causing chaos in the town and called them to repentance.³ Did you notice their response? Through Nehemiah's stern, yet gentle rebuke toward these people, they listened.⁴

Have you ever been in a situation like this? You hear of a “concern” about a person, job, company, church and one thing leads to another and soon it becomes gossip? What is your response? Do you call them out right then and there or do you join in? If they are complaining about this person, job, company, or church, do you encourage the Matthew 18 principle to go and talk to that person first to try to work at a resolution? If not, why aren't you?

Have you been on the other end of this discussion, where you are the one being confronted? Can you describe a time in which this happened? How did you feel about it during the discussion, after it, and now? Did you submit to their correction if appropriate? We as church need to be like the people of Jerusalem under the direction of our elders (Paul Vroom and Nathan Phillips) as well as the deacons (John Meskis, Todd Paben, and Emily Schissler) in how we submit to their God-given authority and

¹ Most scholars say that this affected only the extremely poor.

² [Nehemiah 5:6](#)

³ [Nehemiah 5:9](#)

⁴ [Nehemiah 5:12](#)

leadership. We need to do our best as a church and believers in Jesus Christ to worship God through submitting to our leaders and doing our best to work at reconciliation with our brothers and sisters.

This week, think about your relationships that you have with people (wife, husband, child, co-worker, family member, church member...etc.) and if there are any unsolved issues that you have with them. If there are, pray to God to figure out how to best handle them. Then, when God calls, confront them (or be open to being confronted) in a Godly manor. Seek true reconciliation with these people and continue to pray for healing in those situations. Continue to pray for your church leaders. Ask them how you can best pray for them and encourage them.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. When does "sharing a concern" with someone cross the line into gossip? How can we avoid this?
2. How can we know when to drop a matter versus when to go to the person to try to get it resolved?
3. When is it right to leave a church? When is it wrong?
4. "Obey your leaders and submit to them" (Heb. 13:17) frightens most of us. What limits apply to both leaders and people?

SUMMING IT UP:

- In this chapter, Nehemiah confronted the nobles privately, but then he moved on to rebuke their sin publicly. There are many Christian leaders who are afraid to confront sinners with their sin, whether in private or in public. When is it appropriate to do this kind of confrontation?
- Nehemiah knew that human nature is full of good intentions that never make it into practice. So he made these rich men take a public oath before the priests, that they would follow through. Then, in the tradition of the prophets, he dramatically shook out his robe in front of them and said,

"So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said "Amen" and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

That's making them sign on the dotted line! What does church wide accountability look like? Are areas within Missio Dei Church where the Elders need to call the whole church to account?