



## **RESOLVING CONFLICT**

### **Nehemiah 5:1-13**

- **We're learning from the decisions and actions of Nehemiah how to get on the pathway to success in every area of our lives (Nehemiah 1-3), and how to respond when we have opposition from the world (Nehemiah 4).**
- *"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* (2 Timothy 3:12)
- **The greatest hindrance to Christians and Churches often comes not from the outside, but from from division between Christians (Nehemiah 5:1-13).**
- ***What are some of the conflicts I've had with other Christians, and what caused those conflicts?***
- *"Churches will have conflict, even if they are the most productive, Spirit-filled and Biblical Churches in the world." - Michael Hare, *When Conflict Happens: A Proven Process For Resolving Unhealthy Disagreements And Embracing Healthy Ones**
- **Conflict with other Christians will happen, so we have to learn how to resolve our conflicts or the Devil and devilish people will be victorious.**
- Jesus - *"Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart."* (Matthew 12:25)
- **One of the most important life skills we have to learn is conflict resolution.**
- ***What are some steps we can take to resolve conflicts with other Christians?***

***Resolving Conflict With Others Requires:***

### **UNDERSTANDING SOME CAUSES OF CONFLICT**

- *"About this time some of the men and their wives raised a cry of protest against their fellow Jews."* (Nehemiah 5:1)
- **Conflict between people occurs when there are *Material shortages* (Nehemiah 5:2), *Financial bondages* (Nehemiah 5:3-4) and *Relational disrespect* (Nehemiah 5:5).**
- **God had forbidden His people from taking advantage of one another (Exodus 2:25, Deuteronomy 23:19-20, Leviticus 25:35-37) but some Jews ignored His commands.**

- **The Lord has also declared that Christians should never take advantage of one another nor take advantage of non-Christians.**
- *“Don’t just pretend to love others. . . . Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. . . . When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them.”* (Romans 12:9-10, 13)
- **The root cause of relational conflict among Christians is always selfishness.**
- *“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but you don’t get it.”* (James 4:1-2)
- **Most of the time it’s fulfilling to serve alongside other Christians, but sometimes it can be frustrating especially when people have self-centered agendas.**
- ***How have selfish motives negatively impacted groups that I’ve been a part of?***

### **Resolving Conflict With Others Requires:**

#### **IMPLEMENTING SOME SOLUTIONS FOR CONFLICT**

- Nehemiah - *“When I heard their complaints, I was very angry.”* (Nehemiah 5:6)
- **When people are mistreated or someone tries to cause division between Christians we ought to become angry.**
- *“Don’t sin by letting anger control you.”* (Ephesians 4:26)
- **Mature Christians know the difference between godly and ungodly types of anger.**
- **We need to be angry at sin and the Devil rather than being angry with people.**
- ***What steps we can take to deal with injustice or conflict between Christians?***
- **When Dealing With Injustice Or Conflict We Should Reflect Before We Speak.**
  - Nehemiah - *“After thinking it over, I spoke out against these nobles and officials.”* (Nehemiah 5:7)
  - *“Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life God desires.”* (James 1:19-20).
  - **“Man’s anger” causes us to act in revenge, whereas God’s anger causes to act in righteousness, which requires reflection on our part.**
- **When Dealing With Injustice Or Conflict We Should Confront The Offenders.**
  - Nehemiah - *“After thinking it over, I spoke out against these nobles and officials. I told them, ‘You are hurting your own relatives by charging interest when they borrow money!’”* (Nehemiah 5:7)
  - Jesus – *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you’ve won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he still refuses to listen, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”* (Matthew 18:15-17)
  - **Jesus loved pagans and tax collectors but didn’t treat them like brothers.**
  - **If we talk about people with others prior to having confronted them, we have sinned against them.**
  - **Most of us don’t want to confront others, but it is a requirement if we’re to have strong relationships and maintain unity among God’s people.**

- Paul - *“Warn a derisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”* (Titus 3:10-11)
- **One of the tasks of mature Christians is to warn troublemakers.**
- **When Dealing With Injustice Or Conflict We Should Attempt To Resolve The Situation.**
  - Nehemiah - *“Then I called a public meeting to deal with the problem. At the meeting I said to them, ‘We are doing all we can to redeem our Jewish relatives who have had to sell themselves to pagan foreigners, but you are selling them back into slavery again. How often must we redeem them?’ And they had nothing to say in their defense.”* (Nehemiah 5:7-8)
  - **We must be willing to confront even influential people, and we should be willing to confront publicly if the issue has become a public issue.**
  - Nehemiah - *““Then I pressed further, ‘What you are doing is not right! Should you not walk in the fear of our God in order to avoid being mocked by enemy nations?’”* (Nehemiah 5:9)
  - **Discord among believers is always a poor testimony to unbelievers.**
  - Nehemiah - *“I myself, as well as my brothers and my workers, have been lending the people money and grain, but now let us stop this business of charging interest. You must restore their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and homes to them this very day. And repay the interest you charged when you lent them money, grain, new wine, and olive oil.”* (Nehemiah 5:10-11)
  - **When we challenge people to do what is right, they will often repent and make restitution or pursue reconciliation.**
  - Nehemiah - *“They replied, ‘We will give back everything and demand nothing more from the people. We will do as you say.’ Then I called the priests and made the nobles and officials swear to do what they had promised.”* (Nehemiah 5:12)
- **When Dealing With Injustice Or Conflict We Should Set A Godly Example.**
  - Nehemiah - *“For the entire twelve years that I was governor of Judah . . . neither I nor my officials drew on our official food allowance. The former governors, in contrast, had laid heavy burdens on the people, demanding a daily ration of food and wine, besides forty pieces of silver. Even their assistants took advantage of the people. But because I feared God, I did not act that way. . . . I refused to claim the governor’s food allowance because the people already carried a heavy burden.”* (Nehemiah 5:14-15, 18)
  - **One reason Nehemiah was a successful leader was because he led by example - modeling compassion and unselfishness towards others.**
  - Paul – *“Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 11:1)
- **“If we are to transform painful crises into genuine breakthroughs, we must change the way we view conflict. Conflict avoidance and defensive reactions must be replaced with Biblical insight and spiritual responsiveness.” - Michael Hare, *When Conflict Happens: A Proven Process For Resolving Unhealthy Disagreements And Embracing Healthy Ones***

- **The Bible teaches that Christian and Church unity is to be maintained at all costs.**
- *“Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.”* (Ephesians 4:3)
- **Conflict is inevitable, but the Lord wants us to minimize and overcome conflict so that we can glorify Him and better accomplish His work and ministry.**
- Jesus - *“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples.”* (John 13:35)
- **Individually we can’t accomplish a lot, but collectively we can make a great difference for good and for God in our world.**
- *“Reconciliation is wonderful, but it’s not always possible, because it depends on a godly response from both parties. Forgiveness however depends only on us. We can forgive even if the offending party is unresponsive.”* - Michael Hare, *When Conflict Happens*
- Jesus - *“God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.”* (Matthew 5:9)
- ***What have I learned today about addressing and resolving conflict, and what steps do I need to take in the future to become a better “peace-maker”?***