

Icebreaker:

If the money runs out before the month runs out, what do you go without? Have you ever dealt with debt or poverty in your family or extended family?

Questions:

1. As you reflect on Patricia's testimony in worship Sunday morning, what thoughts and questions does it bring up?
2. The NEB translates verse 7 as saying, "I mastered my feelings and reasoned with the nobles..." How good are you at mastering your feelings when you are angry?
3. God's concern for the poor and the disadvantaged is seen in almost every book of the Bible. Nehemiah takes concern and puts it into action as the leader. What is one action we can take as individuals, families, or a home group to fight poverty or injustice?
4. Near the end of the chapter Nehemiah says that as governor, he takes no extra pay and does not "lord it over" the people. Loving God and loving others may require personal sacrifice. When has loving God and others cost you something?
5. Nehemiah devotes himself to building the wall and to going without some wonderful food meant for the governor's office (verses 14-19), then asks God to remember his sacrifice. Is it ok for him to ask God to remember him in this way?
6. We've seen Nehemiah pray in this book (1:5-11, 2:4, 4:4-5, 5:19). What stands out about his prayers? Can you see yourself praying like Nehemiah? Why or why not?

Prayer:

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

prayer requests

- > Prayers of healing for Theresa Beardsley, and John Lindenschmidt.
- > Prayers of comfort for Scott and Kathy Weber and family in the death of Scott's mother.

In this passage, many of the exiles were suffering. The rich nobles around them would lend them money, then when the exiles could not pay it back, the lenders would take over their fields. Left with no way to make money, the poor would sell their children into slavery, a common but awful practice of that time. Nehemiah is angry. He works to bring justice to this situation. He convinces the nobles to promise to give back the land and take an oath to do what they had promised. He makes his own sacrifices so that others can eat. Leadership for Nehemiah involves not only building a wall, but advocating for the poor and trying to bring justice.

1. Patricia is a young lady who was an orphan in Uganda and was taken captive as a young girl. Summarize what she said and then discuss how it affected you.
2. Nehemiah was angry because of the injustice he saw from the lenders to the borrowers. He demands change. When you are angry, even when it is righteous anger, can you handle your anger and channel it into good words and actions?
3. Caring for the poor is everywhere in scripture. Certainly Jesus exemplifies caring for the poor and those on the margins. In Matthew 25, Jesus says to care for the hungry, those who need clothes, the stranger, the sick and the prisoner. In James 1:27, we are told to care for widows and orphans. What is one practical thing you can do?
4. Nehemiah makes sacrifices to love others. To follow God, and to do His work, often means sacrifice. Name a time and share when loving others has cost you something, or share a favorite story of seeing that happen.
5. Could Nehemiah's brief prayer in 5:19 be seen as controversial? Perhaps yes. We are called to be humble. And we are called to be honest in prayer. If we are truly living for God, perhaps it is ok to include asking God to remember our service in prayer. Or maybe we should leave it all up to God.
6. Nehemiah prays with passion, emotion (tears of sadness and anger), and with boldness. Nehemiah has very specific requests. He prays against his enemies. He does not hold back! What can you learn from him? We can often be soft and quiet in our prayers, sometimes we need to pray with boldness.