Leadership Lessons from Nehemiah

Lesson 5: God's Blessing Through Giving
Nehemiah Chapter 5, the Value of Giving

Prepare for Chapter 4: Nehemiah 4:6 shows us the key to the entire book: "…*for the people had a mind to work."* In Chapter 5 we will see that work has a purpose—we work to give.

I. Don't oppress the poor.

Nehemiah 5:1–5 *And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. [2] For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live.*

[3] Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth.

[4] There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. [5] Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

A. Nehemiah addressed the abuse of usury, which is charging interest.

    1. The Israelites were not to charge their brethren usury for basic needs, such as food and clothes.

    Deuteronomy 23:19 *Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury.*

B. Unjust taxation made it difficult for people to live. There was a lack of pity on the poor. When you pity the poor, you're lending to the Lord, and that which you've given, he's going to pay you again (Proverbs 19:17).

C. The Bible talks about four types of giving: tithe (a tenth), offering (anything above a tenth), alms (giving to the poor), and seed (giving to a future harvest).

    1. Jesus spoke about giving to the poor.

    Matthew 6:1–4 *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. [2] Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [3] But when thou doest alms,*

let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: [4] That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

II. What you sow, you will reap.

Nehemiah 5:6–13 *And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. [7] Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. [8] And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.*

[9] Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? [10] I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. [11] Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.

[12] Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. [13] Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise.

A. Nehemiah was passionate about life and living. He got angry that while the people were busy working, others took advantage of them.

B. He was not afraid to speak to the leaders about changing their ways.

C. Nehemiah called things as he saw them.

    1. We need to treat every person with respect, no matter how much wealth they have or don't have.

    James 2:1–9 *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.[2] For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; [3] And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: [4] Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?*

    [5] Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love

him?[6] But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? [7] Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

[8] If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: [9] But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

D. When you get your heart right with God, it affects how you treat people. God is no respecter of people—He's a respecter of faith!

    1. When Zacchaeus repented, he gave back to the people he had taken from.

    Luke 19:8 *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

E. Nehemiah said that whatever you sow, you're going to reap. He told them to give back to them, take care of them, and not to oppress them. Nehemiah says they sowed bad seed and will reap a bad harvest if they don't repent.

    1. They repented joyfully.

    Galatians 6:6–10 *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. [7] Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. [8] For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. [9] And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not. [10] As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

III. Your giving tells where you are going.

Nehemiah 5:14–19 *Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. [15] But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. [16] Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work.*

[17] Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. [18] Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared

for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

[19] Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

A. While Nehemiah worked on the restoration, he didn't take a government paycheck for 12 years because he respected his relationship with God.

    1. What you do in the realm of money has much to do with your relationship with God.

B. He gave about $ 5,000 a day from his personal wealth to care for the people during the restoration process: 52 days = $260,000.

C. Nehemiah put his trust, confidence, and hope in God. He trusted God for the reward.

Conclusion: Our attitude toward money reveals much about our relationship with God. Matthew 6:21 says, *"Where your treasure is, there will also be your heart."*

Go Deeper
Working to make a living is a bad mentality. If you're working to make a living, it's all about you. But if you start working to give and make giving your goal, your living will be no problem. Ephesians 4:28 says, "Let him who stole, steal no more: but rather let him work, working with his hands that which is good, that he may give to him who has need." When you work, you have more to give!

- What is your attitude toward the work you do?
- What change are you willing to make to give more?

Whatever you sow, you're going to reap. No one else determines your harvest. If I'm reaping what I sow, I can evaluate my harvest.

- How have you seen positive or negative reapings in your life?
- What harvest do you want to see, and what will you sow to reap it?

Declaration: I sow good seed and will reap a good harvest because I love God and trust Him to bring increase.