



GROWTH GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Fall Quarter - Lesson 5 - Week of October 6, 2024

Lesson: YOU CAN HELP THE HURTING

Bible Verses: Nehemiah 5:1-13; Deuteronomy 27:17-19; Psalm 68:4-6; Isaiah 1:16-17;
Luke 14:1-14; Acts 4:32-35; James 1:22-27; Romans 2:11

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. If you could change one core personality trait, what would it be?
2. What is an absolute relationship deal breaker for you?

DISCUSSION

"As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!" (Nehemiah 5:8)

Reflection: Is there someone in your life who reached out to you when you were in need? What did that person's support (emotional, financial, physical) mean to you at that time?

Situation: Read Nehemiah 5:1-13. Nehemiah not only had to deal with outside threats from enemies like Sanballat and Tobiah but also with internal strife at the hands of his people. Due to the hectic work schedule on the wall, many people did not have the time or energy to attend to their personal matters. As a result, some were experiencing financial difficulties and even hunger. When Nehemiah learns these workers are being exploited by the wealthy officials and nobles in the region, he sets out to address the problem and provide help to the hurting.

1. What was the complaint some of the exiles raised against their fellow countrymen?
2. How did Nehemiah respond when he first heard the accusations?
3. How did Nehemiah come to the defense of those who were suffering?
4. What did Nehemiah mean when he said the wealthier citizens were "selling" their own people (see verse 8)?
5. How does the congregation or individuals respond to the hurting people?
6. What did Nehemiah say these citizens needed to do immediately to remedy the problem?
7. According to Nehemiah, people who fear God should treat the poor with kindness and deference. How does that apply to believers in today's world?

Inspiration: Take a moment to look at your hand. Look at the back, then the palm. Reacquaint yourself with your fingers. What if someone were to film a documentary on your hands? What if a producer were to tell your story based on the life of your hands? What would we see?

Were you to show the documentary to your friends, you'd be proud of certain moments: your hand extending with a gift; placing a ring on another's finger; doctoring a wound; preparing a meal; or folding in prayer. On the other hand, there may be shots of accusing fingers and abusive fists. Or perhaps, hands taking more often than giving, demanding instead of offering, wounding rather than loving.

Oh, the power of our hands! Leave them unmanaged and they become weapons: clawing for power, seducing for pleasure. But manage them and our hands become instruments of grace, not just tools in the hands of God, but God's very hands. God works through people. Surrender them and these hands become the hands of heaven. That's what Jesus did. Our Savior surrendered His hands to God. Will you surrender your hands to the work of God?

Reaction:

1. How has God used your "hands" as an instrument of His grace?
2. What are some ways that Jesus completely surrendered His hands to God?
3. How does the story of the suffering exiles in Nehemiah show that God cares for the hurting?
4. What responsibility do you have to help the poor and oppressed?

Life lessons: While God "does not show favoritism" (Romans 2:11), He has a special place in His heart for the poor. *"He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing (Deuteronomy 10:18)."* Read Proverbs 14:31. God desires that we pay attention to the poor and care for them. We can all have seasons when we are poor (health-poor, spirit-poor, or money-poor).

James writes, *"Religion that God accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27)."* God loves the poor, but He does not want them to stay that way. Our calling as believers in Christ, just as in Nehemiah's day, is to help the hurting and seek to alleviate the oppression they are facing.

Devotion: Father, we are grateful you are concerned with our needs. You comfort the hurting, provide for the poor, and deliver the oppressed. Help us today to be your "hands and feet" in the world so we may be your instruments in alleviating the suffering of others. Thank you, Lord.

Journaling: What are some ways that you can help another person in need this week?

Prayer Focus: God, help us to reach the hurting in our daily lives.