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MEET ME AT THE WALL TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

Nehemiah: See You at the Wall

Dr. Ken Culver

Nehemiah 5:1-3

REVIEW: HOW SATAN TRIES TO STOP GOD'S WORK

- DERISION (2:19)
Response needed: Ignore It
- DISCOURAGEMENT (4:6-10)
Response needed: Reorganize and Remember the Lord
- DANGER (4:11-12)
Response needed: Resist It
- DIVISION/DISCORD (5:1-13)

"If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand." Mark 3:25

1. THE CAUSE OF CONFLICT (vs. 1-5) 4 Complaints of the People

1. FOOD SHORTAGE (v. 2)
2. FINANCIAL BONDAGE (v. 3)
3. INFLATED TAXES (v. 4)
4. FORCED SLAVERY (v. 5)

THE REAL PROBLEM (v. 1)

"Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers."

WHAT GOD SAID ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Exodus 22:25

Deuteronomy 23:19-20

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Leviticus 25:35-37

TRUTH: THE ROOT CAUSE OF INTERNAL CONFLICT AND DISCORD 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

The most fulfilling part of ministry is working with people, but the most frustrating part of ministry is working with people.

2. THE CURE FOR CONFLICT (vs 6-13)

STEP 1 – REACTION: GET ANGRY

“When I heard their outcry and these charges I was very angry.” (v. 6)

“Be angry, and sin not.” Eph. 4:26 (KJV)

There is the right kind of anger and the wrong kind of anger. Maturity is knowing the difference.

The point is we need to be angry at sin. Louis Cossell says, “We’re exposed daily to so much human tragedy we’ve experienced what some have called compassion fatigue. Having felt sorry for so many flood victims, earthquake victims and war victims we simply cannot muster the sympathy we know we ought to have for fresh casualties. But even worse than compassion fatigue is indignation fatigue. Many of us seem to have lost the capacity to get mad, at least as mad as we ought to get, about lying, cheating and stealing. To be indifferent to wrong doing, to shrug it off and laugh at it is a symptom of advanced degeneration of the moral sense. Someone seems to have administered a massive dose of Novocain to our national conscious.”

STEP 2 – REFLECTION: THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

“I pondered them in my mind.” (v. 7)

“So after thinking about it, I spoke out against those rich government officials ...” (v. 7 LB)

The Hebrew Word literally means: “I consulted with myself.”

“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

There is a difference between man’s anger and God’s anger.

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Man's anger is when we act in revenge.

God's anger is when we act in righteousness.

STEP 3 – REBUKE: YOU PRIVATELY CONFRONT THE OFFENDING PARTY

“I pondered them in my mind then I accused the nobles and officials. I told them, ‘You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!’”

Jesus' answer to resolving conflict:

“If your brother sins against you, go show 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.”

TRUTH: MATURE BELIEVERS MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO CONFRONT.

“Warn a divisive 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

STEP 4 – RESOLUTION: PUBLICLY DEAL WITH PUBLIC DIVISIONS

“I pondered them in my mind and then I accused the nobles and officials. I told them, ‘You're exacting usury from your own countrymen.’ So I called together a large meeting to deal with them. I said, ‘As far back as possible we have bought back our Jewish brothers who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers only for them to be sold back to us.’ And they kept quiet because they could find nothing to say.” (vs. 7-8)

“So I continued, ‘What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?’” (v. 9)

DISCORD IS ALWAYS A POOR TESTIMONY

“Give back to them immediately. My brothers and my men are also lending people money and grain but not for interest. But let the exacting of usury stop. Give back to them immediately their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses and also the usury you're charging them, the hundredth part of money, grain, new wine and oils.” (v. 10)

THE INTEREST WAS 1% PER MONTH OR 12% PER YEAR!

WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THIS PUBLIC CONFRONTATION?

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The nobles repented.

“And they said, ‘We will give it back, and we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say’” (v. 12a)

HE DIDN'T TAKE THEIR WORD FOR IT – HE HELD THEM ACCOUNTABLE.

“Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and the officials take an oath to do what they had promised.” (v. 12b)

STEP 5 – REINFORCEMENT: SET AN EXAMPLE OF UNSELFISHNESS (vs. 14-19)

“...Such a man be shaken out and emptied. At this time the whole assembly said, ‘Amen’ and ‘Praise the Lord,’ and the people did as they promised. When I was appointed governor in the land of Judah neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor. But the earlier governors, those preceding me, placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I didn't act like that. I devoted myself to the work on the wall. All my men were assembled there for the work. We didn't acquire any land. Furthermore, 150 Jews and officials ate at my table as those who came to us from surrounding nations. Each day one ox, six sheep, and some poultry were prepared for me. And ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this I never demanded the food allotment to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people.” (vs 13b-19)

“Follow my example as I have followed the example of Christ.” I Cor. 11:1

TRUTH: MATURE BELIEVERS ONLY ASK OTHERS TO DO WHAT THEY ARE ALREADY DOING.

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR W.C.C.

“MAKE EVERY EFFORT to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3