

Small Group Study Guide

Growth Through Conflict

Series: Nehemiah Rebuilding a Life of Faith

Nehemiah 5:1-19

From Sunday October 18, 2020

Appetizer:

Activity: Be honest: Are you a person who avoids conflict like the plague, or are you a person who is willing to be forthright and can sleep well at night when someone is in disagreement with you? Explain your answer: Why do you avoid conflict? Or, conversely, why doesn't it bother you that much?

Read: Read Nehemiah 5:1-19. What stands out to you? What kind of conflict are we dealing with?

Main Course:

Conflict is something that all of us deal with. Some conflict is minor: it's small disagreements that we have to deal with every day. Other conflicts are major: it affects where we work, where we play, and who we spend time with. Some conflicts are small to us and large to others. And other conflicts are devastating to us, and yet not to the people we are in conflict with. Conflict is a strange thing.

When we look at the passage, we see that conflict was something that ended up bringing the community together. The bottom line of the message from Sunday is this: **when it comes to building our faith, we need to see conflict as part of our discipleship process.**

Question: Have you ever asked yourself the question: "How do I demonstrate Jesus in the conflict I am in?" If you haven't, why not? Why is this a difficult question to ask ourselves.

From the passage, it was suggested that conflict usually arises out of two areas: (1) Some kind of perceived injustice where someone is hurt, and (2) Some kind of perceived selfishness where someone is looking after their own self-interest.

Question: When you think of conflicts you have gone through, which one of these areas (Hurt or selfishness) arises most often? How can you determine what kind of conflict is arising? And who

gets to make that call (who gets to say who is hurt and who is selfish?)

One of the first things Nehemiah does when he hears about the conflict is to address it head on.

Addressing conflict seems like an obvious thing to do, but it appears to be the number one problem when it comes to conflict: people would rather avoid it at all costs! And yet conflict can provide an opportunity for Christians to demonstrate Jesus to others.

Connie Jakob from the Brave Parent Institute suggests that, when approaching parenting we can remind ourselves of who we are in Christ. This parenting advice also works with addressing conflict. When addressing conflict we need to remind ourselves that:

1. We are brave.
2. We will show up when it's hard.
3. We will love without walls.
4. We will forgive when it hurts.
5. We will rise above the storm.

Question: When it comes to these five statements, which one resonates with you? Which do you find most difficult to embrace?

Nehemiah set the tone in conflict by being an example. He was an example to those who were hurt by demonstrating generosity. And he was an example to those who were selfish by demonstrating a servant's heart.

Question: How can we display generosity in a conflict, regardless of what the conflict is about? How can we demonstrate a servant's heart?

Dessert:

One of the core values of Emmanuel Church is that we are a people who extend grace. This does not mean we are perfect or we practice a Christianity where everyone is always happy and getting along. But it does mean that we seek to provide a safe environment for all people to ask questions, wrestle with issues, and make mistakes.

Activity: Rather praying specifically for the people you may be in conflict with, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the role that you play in the conflict.

Ask for God to give you the grace to practice generosity and a servant's heart in the areas of conflict in your life. Remember, it may not be about resolving the specific conflict, for we can only deal with our own responses. But it has everything to do with looking more like Jesus.