

Guidelines for Leaders:

If you aren't doing so already, encourage your people to do their own homework on the questions before your meeting.

There is more than enough material in these questions to fill up your whole discussion time. So, consider these three suggestions for group discussion:

First, choose just one of the 2 Introduction questions.

Second, choose no more than 4 or 5 of the Understanding questions.

Third, be sure to allow enough time for the Application, which is where we really seek the impact of the sermon on our daily Christian lives. The Application is also a great opportunity for group prayer.

Introduction:

1. When did you decide it would be good for you to accept less than what you deserve? Did you have a situation that you had the power to really turn to your own advantage ---and yet you chose not to?
2. What kind of experiences have you had with bosses who pitched in, and with bosses who "lorded it over you"?

Understanding:

3. Which is more important to God: our internal health or our external progress? Use scripture to justify your answer.
4. Read Proverbs 22:22-23. Why should someone who sets up a scheme to defraud the poor be terrified?
5. Read the beginning of verse 7 carefully. When Nehemiah became very angry, would he have lashed out with an outraged tweet if he could? What do you think he did?
6. In verse 6, the Hebrew word for Nehemiah being "angry" can be translated "to burn." Indeed, after Israel made the golden calf, scripture says the Lord "burned with anger". Read Exodus 32:7-14. How does Moses deter the disaster of facing God's burning anger? How does Christ rescue us from that disaster? In the light of today's sermon and scripture, how can we reflect "being rescued" in how we live our lives?
7. What do you think motivated the upper class to charge such high interest on the loans to their countrymen?
8. Compare Nehemiah 5:9 and 5:15. What common reason is given for being obedient to God? What do you think it means to obey God for this reason? What does it not mean?
9. Read Nehemiah 5:14-19. Nehemiah makes convincing arguments here. But how does he go way beyond just making a good argument? Why does that matter for us?
10. The people of Jerusalem were crying out because of the sickness going on in the city. And when that happens—when sickness is diagnosed—leaders must decide how they're going to respond. Read Ezekiel 22:29-30. How did Nehemiah "stand in the gap"? In what ways can we "stand in the gap"?

Application:

11. A wonderful expression of God's heart for justice is in Jeremiah 7:5-7. How did Nehemiah's actions meet these qualifications for dwelling with God? How does our life in Christ bring all these commands to life? How do you live this out in your life, in your family, and in our church?

12. In John 13:1-15 Jesus is washing the disciples' feet. Some churches have foot-washing services where members wash each other's feet. What do you think this is supposed to show? How does your group exemplify that kind of love for one another?