

News Story Summary

Recently, the minimum wage (\$7.25) rose in 21 states as a result of a national movement to boost the earnings of lower-paid workers. The new hourly rate took effect on January 1 in all the 21 states except New York, where the increase took effect one day earlier. These increases impacted the salaries of 2.4 million workers. Other states will increase their minimum wage later this year or over the next few years. Proponents of the minimum wage increase predict it will boost the economy. But some critics say employers will be forced to hire fewer employees or decrease working hours.

Economic analyst David Cooper says the state increase will not change the economic status of workers to a large degree. But it does mean they will be able to spend a little more on basic necessities such as food, gasoline, and housing.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrases “minimum wage” and “minimum wage increase.”)

Focus Attention

Prior to the study, write the words *first job* on the board.

As group members arrive, call attention to the words. Lead them to discuss their first jobs: who they worked for; what they did; how much they earned. Ask them if they were earning the minimum wage.

Share the story about the minimum wage increase. *What difference would the increase make to a family of five wherein Mom and Dad earned the minimum wage? What difference would it make to a community?*

Say: In the Book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah grieved because the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins. He poured out his heart to God in prayer, and God moved on the heart of King Artaxerxes to send Nehemiah to Jerusalem and provide what Nehemiah needed. The people in Jerusalem were also moved and joined Nehemiah in the work of rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah was confident that God’s hand was on him.

Explain the importance of a wall around Jerusalem. Ask: *In what ways are the wages earned by a worker like a city wall? What difference did God’s hand on Nehemiah make?*

Challenge

Remind the group of the minimum wage increase story. Ask: *Do you believe people place more trust in God or their job? Explain.*

Lead group members to reflect on their jobs and consider these questions. *What difference would God's hand on you make in your workplace? How does God fit into your work life? In ways does your job and the money you earn replace the safety and security of God?* Challenge group members to consider how God's hand can be more prominent in their day-to-day jobs and inspire their work.

Lead in prayer, asking God to bless the group members in their respective jobs. Ask God to help group members to develop the confidence of Nehemiah that God's hand is on them as they work.