



Esther, Ezra Nehemiah Sermon Series  
Bonus Session: Establish Justice  
in God's Community  
Potential Sermon Title: Credibility on Parade  
Passage: Nehemiah 5:14-18

## Connection to Nehemiah 5:1-19

The Bible study focuses on Nehemiah's response to an injustice that took place as the city walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt. In the background, Nehemiah set an example, giving him the right to rebuke the rulers and nobles for their unjust actions.

NOTE: The Winter 14-15 quarter spans twelve Sundays. A special Sanctity of Human Life lesson suggested is included for use on January 18, 2015. The bonus lesson can be inserted in that slot as an alternate if so desired with the lesson affirming the value of all people.

## Introduction/Opening

Imagine shopping in a grocery store and running into your physician. He or she may have even given you diet advice. Most would expect to see fresh vegetables, whole grains, fresh fish, and other such items in their basket. Imagine your response if the only things in the basket were processed and fatty foods (the things we are encouraged to avoid or moderate). The next time they give us advice about our diets, we will question what they are saying. If a chili-cheese bacon-wrapped hotdog and a side of onion rings are okay for them, then shouldn't it be okay for us? The issue is credibility.

Nehemiah faced a situation that could have easily derailed or at least delayed the completing of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. Some people were taking advantage of the workers unfairly, making a significant profit in the process. Nehemiah confronted these leaders and averted the potential problem. Nehemiah had the power to address this issue, but he also had the credibility. In Nehemiah 5:14-18, we discover that he set an example. From his own example, he spoke.

Within his life, we find four questions that impact our credibility and determine what kind of example we will be in this world.

## Outline

1. Decision 1: Purpose
  - a. Upon what will I focus? (What is my purpose?)
  - b. Nehemiah faced a choice: to rebuild Jerusalem or to seize an opportunity to become a wealthy man.
  - c. It was the need for rebuilding the city that motivated him in the first place.
  - d. The rebuilt city would be a testimony to God and His provisions.

2. Decision 2: Accountability
  - a. To whom will I answer?
  - b. Nehemiah understood that ultimately, we all must answer to God (fear of God).
  - c. The majority is not always right. Nehemiah would have taken these actions even if no one else followed.
  
3. Decision 3: Empathy
  - a. What will it cost them?
  - b. Nehemiah was aware that the people working on the wall were doing so at the expense of working in the fields to provide for their families.
  - c. One of the hardest things for a leader to do is understand the demands his dream places on the people who actually do the work.
  
4. Decision 4: Sacrifice
  - a. What will it cost me?
  - b. There is always a sacrifice to be made if you are to accomplish anything.
  - c. God will provide for the one committed to completing tasks assigned by Him.
  - d. In some cases, it is our rights that we sacrifice (Nehemiah had the right to collect payment for food needed, but chose not to do so.)

## **Conclusion**

Nehemiah became an example out of necessity but not by accident. He made some crucial decisions that put him on a collision course with others who chose differently. The difference was that of purpose. The purpose decision impacts every other decision we make. It is the purpose that dictates the kind of example we will become and for whom.

Nehemiah was heartbroken that Jerusalem lay in ruins and disarray. It was the city set aside by God for worship; the city that was to bear His name. What did the ruins declare about God and the people who claimed to follow Him? He couldn't stand the thought of God being dishonored by His people's failure so Nehemiah acted. With bringing honor to God as His goal, Nehemiah became a compelling force and example for all.

I can't tell you what it will cost you or others for you to become consumed by honoring God's name. I can promise you that the cost to others may be greater than what it costs you and me if we fail to become consumed with making His name known. Will you join me in seeking to make our Savior's name known?