Nehemiah Series 7
The Leader Needs to Resolve Internal Crisis
August 29, 2014

I. WELCOME, 15 mins.
Prepare a couple of simple, fun and delightful icebreakers to help your group warm up. Help your cell group members to lay aside their busyness and tiredness and prepare their hearts to come before God.

II. WORSHIP, 20 mins.
Prayerfully choose a few songs to lead the cell group members to worship God. The worship leader would encourage members to come before the throne of God to seek God’s face, and lead them into God’s presence. During this time, the cell group leader will also lead the group to pray aloud for the following prayer items:

A. MISSION ORGANIZATION: ____________, and their needs are: ________________
(Please contact the church if you don’t know the needs of the mission organization.)

B. CHURCH MINISTRY:
- 8/10-9/28 Legacy Class by Dave Ramsey
- 8/24 Family Fun Day @ Lick Mill Park
- 9/3, 9/17 English Prayer Meeting
- 9/9 English Committee Meeting

C. New comer: ________________ Confirm new comers’ name before the meeting.
For sick members, friends or relatives: ________________ Please discuss how you may show your care to them.

III. WORD, 45 mins. Through sharing and discussing God’s word, the group applies it to their daily life.

A. Sharing the message from last Sunday’s sermon: (It would be helpful if you could listen on-line once again)
1. What is the key message from last Sunday’s sermon? How did God speak to you through the message?
2. How would you respond to the message? What action will you take after listening to the message?

B. Topic of the week: The Leader Needs to Resolve Internal Crisis

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<th>Verses: Nehemiah 5:1-19</th>
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<td>Memorizing Verses: Remember me with favor, my God, for all I have done for these people. (Nehemiah 5:19)</td>
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Preface:
Romans 8:31 says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” There’s no doubt that with God’s help, Nehemiah can shrewdly outwit the external threats and dangers of the enemy. Facing the taunts, mocking, and military attacks of the enemies, Nehemiah was able to have victory over them through prayer, emphasizing God’s help, changing strategies, leading the people to focus on God and uniting them together with one heart to rebuild the wall. Glory be to God! However, as God’s work proceeds, the enemy will not only attack through external threats, but also use internal concerns to block and hinder the sacred work, even causing it to collapse. The crisis in Jerusalem occurred because of the injustices of the nobles and officials toward the poor among their own people. The nobles and officials exploited the poor and caused them to lose their fields because they needed to borrow money for food and taxes, and even caused their children to become slaves. The poor had no power to redeem back their fields and children. Therefore, they raised a great outcry. The enemy grabbed this opportunity to disturb the people’s hearts, causing the building of the wall to stop. How did Nehemiah resolve this internal crisis and continue the rebuilding of the wall?

1. The leader needs to know that the enemy will attack internally (vs. 1-5)
   a. The nobles and officials use the situation for their own personal gains (vs. 1-4)
   The people of Jerusalem were in poverty, yet the nobles and officials used the situation for their own personal gains, causing the people to bear a heavy yoke and not be able to turn around their lives.
1) The shortage of food (vs. 1-2)

The people focused on the rebuilding of the wall, and as a result they abandoned their farming. This caused a food shortage which forced them to mortgage their fields for food.

2) The prices of the food went up because of the famine (vs. 3)

Not only did the people have a lack of food, but also they faced a famine. The merchants inflated the price of the food, and the poor people could only mortgage their fields to buy food.

3) Mortgage fields to borrow money for paying taxes (vs. 4)

In addition, people needed to pay the required taxes to the king. The people can only mortgage their fields and borrow money from nobles and officials who charged them high interest rates.

b. The shortage leads to an even greater crisis

The poor people exhausted all their resources to feed their families, even taking the risk of borrowing with high interest rate from the nobles and officials. The results are:

1) Their fields belong to another.

When the time came to pay back the loan, the people had no money to pay the debt, so the mortgaged fields became the property of the nobles and officials.

2) No power to redeem their sons and daughters from being slaves.

The people not only borrowed money using their fields, but also borrowed money with their own sons and daughters. The nobles and officials accepted their sons and daughters to be their slaves. However, when the time came to pay the debt, the poor people had no power to redeem back their sons and daughters.

2. The leader courageously resolves the crisis (vs. 6-13)

Nehemiah righteously used stern teachings to correct the nobles and officials. He set himself as an example for them to help them forsake their wicked conduct and to follow God’s promises in being kind to the people.

a. The leader empathizes and makes the right plan (vs. 6-7a)

Nehemiah heard the outcry and pains of the people. He felt deeply and empathized with their pains. Thus, he was angry towards the nobles and officials for their unrighteous and unfair conduct. But he sought to resolve the crisis by planning according to God’s will.

b. The leader courageously rebukes the ones doing the wickedness (vs. 7-9)

Nehemiah was not afraid of the rich and powerful nobles and officials. He rebuked them for taking advantage of the needy people and oppressing them. And he pointed out their wicked conduct.

1) They act wickedly towards their own people

In the past Nehemiah redeemed the Gentiles Jewish slaves who shared his heart. Now the Israelite sons and daughters had become slaves to the nobles and officials who acted wickedly toward them.

2) They do not fear God

God had taught his people that they cannot exact usury from their fellow brothers (Deuteronomy 23:19-20). However, they not only charged interest, but they charged a high interest rate.

3) This will result in the enemies’ slander

The enemies had earlier attacked them with mocking and slander to prevent the Israelites from rebuilding the wall. Now, the enemies could use this actual incident to slander and mock the Israelites so that the Israelites will contradict themselves and stop the rebuilding work.

c. The leader deals publicly with biblical principles, so that the people have no excuse (vs. 10-13)

Nehemiah set himself as an example to teach the people according to biblical principles and he advised and urged the nobles and officials to do the same.

1) Nehemiah and his followers lend money and food to the
people without interest, so that they don’t have worry about their livelihoods (vs. 10).

2) Nehemiah wanted the nobles and officials to return the mortgaged fields, sons and daughters, and interest (vs. 11).

3) The people praise God with one heart (vs. 12-13)
   Before the witness of the people and priests, the nobles and officials accepted Nehemiah’s teachings and were willing to return the benefits that they had received. Additionally, Nehemiah warned them that if they do not act according to God’s promises, they will face punishment from God who will empty their household possessions. At that moment, the spiritual conditions of the people were lifted up even more and all the people with one heart and one mind joyfully praised God and said, “Amen!”

3. The influence of Nehemiah (the leader) comes from a life of loving God and loving people (vs. 14-19)
   a. Nehemiah loves the people and did not add to their burdens (vs. 14-15)
      The governor should have a salary, but the salary came from the taxes of the people. Nehemiah and his followers not only did not accept the salary, but also removed the previous governor’s demands of food from the people and various kinds of oppressive measures.
   b. Nehemiah perseveres in the work that God had given him and did not acquire his own land (vs. 16)
      Nehemiah committed himself to concentrate on the rebuilding of the wall and set aside any efforts to acquire his own land and to settle down.
   c. Nehemiah prepares food for the people to eat with him and often host feasts for the people who served (vs. 17-19)
      Nehemiah provided food daily and was kind to the common people, nobles, and officials. And he often hosted the hardworking people who served. Thus, Nehemiah could come before God with a clear conscience and asked God to remember all that he did and to grant him favor.

Discussion (please choose the topic according to the needs):
1. When you hear people’s grievances, how do you usually respond?
2. Why did the people raise such a great outcry? What kind of impact does this have on the building work?
3. What is the response of Nehemiah after hearing the people’s outcry? Why did he respond in this way?
4. What steps did Nehemiah take to resolve the crisis? How can these steps help you in solving your problems?
5. From the way that Nehemiah resolved the crisis, what are the good characteristic traits that you see in him which you would most like to learn from?

Prayer:
Dear Abba Father in heaven, we thank you and we praise you. Your love is so high and so wide! When we are far away from you, you are still patiently waiting for us to repent and to come back to you. O Lord, may you help me to learn from the devout character of Nehemiah when I face crisis in my life. May I be committed to following your teachings, doing the things that are good in your sight, and walking on the path according to your promises. I thank you and pray in the victorious name of the Lord Jesus, Amen!

IV. WORK (Pray for each other), 10 mins.
   Please break into group of 2 or 3 to pray for each other’s needs.