**BCM Bible Study – February 14/15, 2018**

**Nehemiah: (Nehemiah 4-7)**

Intro: *Nehemiah has returned to Jerusalem and stirred up the people to begin rebuilding the wall. Recall that Sanballat and Tobiah were mentioned in 2:19 as adversaries to the rebuilding effort. Sanballat is the governor of Samaria (intermixing of Jews and Assyrians) and Tobiah lives in Ammon, a known enemy of the Jews.*

Intimidation and Resolve: **Read Nehemiah 4**

* What external and internal opposition does Nehemiah face in completing his task?
* How does Nehemiah respond to the various forms of opposition?
  + How would you describe Nehemiah’s leadership?
  + How does he lead his people spiritually?
* One of the things that Jesus consistently taught is that Christians would face trouble and persecution: **Read John 15:18-21, 26-27; John 16:33**
  + Have you ever faced ridicule for your faith or the way that you were living out your faith? Describe how you handled it interpersonally and emotionally.
    - What encouragement do both Nehemiah and Jesus offer in the face of ridicule?
  + Have you ever faced opposition to carrying out what you sensed God had called you to do? Describe the situation and how it played out.
    - Nehemiah beautifully balances wise action with prayerful dependence in his actions. (see v.20) **Read Ephesians 6:12-18.** How does this passage inform your response to fear, opposition, and discouragement? How do you see Nehemiah enacting this?

Generosity: *To understand Nehemiah 5, it is critical to understand that a major theme of the Old Testament is justice. We understand this to be true of Jesus in his care for the poor and oppressed, but justice also characterized the OT law. For instance, the command to allow for gleaning in fields was intended to provide food for the poor. (Lev. 19:9-10) This goal is summed up in Deut. 15:4: “But there will be no poor among you.” People were to use their wealth for the benefit of others. In fact, every 50th year, all debts were completely wiped free, no matter how much was owed.*

*There are several issues in view in Nehemiah 5, some of which involve oppression from the Persians. However, the focus of the passage are a couple of Mosaic laws. You may read them if you have time, but feel free to share my summary*:

1. The law of exacting interest: **Read Leviticus 25:35-38** – loan money to those in need and do not charge them interest.
2. The law concerning debt-slavery: **Read Lev. 25:39-43, Deut. 15:12-15** – if someone must sell him or herself to you, he or she will only be a slave until the Sabbath year when they will be released. They are to be treated well and to be sent home with gifts out of the owner’s abundance.

**Read Nehemiah 5**

* To what does Nehemiah appeal to convince the nobles and officials or their wrongdoing?
* What does Nehemiah do? Why are his actions so shocking?
  + The way that we treat one another within the church is one of our strongest evangelistic tools. **Read John 13:34-35**.
  + Why does discord within the church hurt its witness?
  + Why does Christian love and harmony portray Christ? How does Nehemiah’s example inform what this ought to look like?
  + Often, we have an “*I deserve \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*” attitude about our belongings or out time. For instance, you may say, “I work hard, so *I deserve* to spoil myself over the weekend.” Nehemiah did not have this attitude, but understood that everything we have belongs to God and is to be used for the good of others – this attitude inspires generosity whereas the “*I deserve*” attitude inspires selfishness.
    - How would you fill in that blank?
    - What practical steps can you take to grow in and practice generosity?

Focus and Discernment: **Read Nehemiah 6:1-16**

*Unlike chapter 4, Nehemiah is now facing personal threats from his enemies.*

* What opposition did Nehemiah face to completing his mission? How does Nehemiah show focus and determination in this passage?
  + Have you ever faced this sort of opposition to what you sense God is calling you to do?
  + Often, the opposition that we face is inward and spiritual as we seek to persevere in faith. Have you experienced such a struggle?
  + **Read Phil. 3:7-14** and **1 Timothy 6:11-12**. What does it look like to persevere in the “good faith of faith?”
* How does Nehemiah exhibit great discernment in this passage?
  + What are some easy ways to discern whether or not something is of God?
    - Why is it sometimes easy to follow path that is clearly not of God? What does this tendency reveal about your motives and heart?
  + **Read Psalm 1** and **Proverbs 1:1-7, 3:1-12.** How can you grow in Christian wisdom?
    - In what way does this often look different from the wisdom of God? How do you see this play out in Nehemiah 6?

Conclusion

In small groups, reflect on what you have discussed. Which of the following applications has most impacted you:

* How do Nehemiah’s actions inform your response to fear, opposition, and discouragement?
* What practical steps can you take to grow in and practice generosity?
* What can you do to grow in wisdom and discernment?