

ST. BARNABAS CHURCH, SWANLAND - SMALL GROUP NOTES

Sharing Christ through friendship

W/c Feb 18th 2018 - Time to rebuild – lessons from Nehemiah: (4) – Challenge.

Bible readings: Nehemiah 5 and Luke 22:24-27

Welcome/ icebreaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When did you last air a grievance with someone and how was it handled?
Worship	<i>Suggestions:</i> 54 Brother, let me be your servant; 120 From heaven you came; 429 O Lord, the clouds are gathering; 483 Restore, O Lord; 664 Beauty for brokenness
Word (<i>refs.</i> ↓)	NB This Sunday's 10.45am sermon will be available from Saturday 24 th Feb to download at www.stbchurch.org.uk (click on the 'downloads' tab)
Luke 22:24-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your experience of people in positions of leadership (either in the church, at work, or other areas of life eg social groups). Are they characterised by servant leadership or 'lording it over' others? What makes a true servant leader?
Nehemiah 5 (all of it if possible, or at least vv.1-17)	<p>Briefly summarise the situation/ story so far (see notes from previous weeks).</p> <p><u>I. A challenge from within to deal with</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After opposition mainly from outside (see ch.4) Nehemiah and his team now face challenge from within. The basic problem is summarised in v.1 and v.5: family members being sold into slavery to fellow Jews in order to settle debts. What are the three 'complaints' of the people (see vv.2,3 and 4)? Are they legitimate grievances? Nehemiah feels angry – with the complaining, or with the injustice? Is he right to feel angry? Isn't it a sin to be angry? (Was Jesus ever angry?) Note his response (vv.6-7): anger, prayerful reflection, direct encounter with the perpetrators (v.7a) and only then going on to address the matter publicly (v.7b-8). Note also the nobles' and officials' response (<i>v.7a – no response - then 8b</i>). Is Nehemiah right to urge the nobles to cancel the interest they are charging and returning land / property pledged as security? (cf. Exodus 22:22-25). Note how he gives the whole matter a faith perspective (v.9, 13). The whole 'assembly' makes religious oaths to act differently (12b), and commits to them in an act of worship (13b). How should this inform our practice as a church when it comes to making 'business' decisions within the church family? How would church life be if we had a truly generous attitude towards the people of God in terms of our time, talents, things, etc. (as well as money)? <p><u>II. A model example to be followed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the perspective of retirement (see vv.13-14) Nehemiah relates his generosity as governor in terms of his compassionate attitude towards the poor (14, 15a) and his concern for God's name to be honoured (v.15b). How does his attitude reflect obedience to the two great commandments (as Jesus gives them, Matt 22:37-39)? Nehemiah appears to be 'boasting' about this but is there any evidence he let people know that he wasn't 'claiming on expenses' at the time? How should we handle such matters in terms of generosity and allowing God to get the glory?
Witness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pray – for your mission link(s) and those with needs within your group. Commit to a more generous attitude to others within the fellowship and those in need in your community Plan to do something together as a group for Holy Week and/or Easter