

Summary

In this sermon from Nehemiah 5, Pastor Mike explores the principle that 'the end does not justify the means.' He examines how Nehemiah discovered that while the walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt (a good work), wealthy Jews were exploiting their poorer brothers through usury and debt slavery. Nehemiah's response demonstrates that how we accomplish God's work is as important as the work itself. The pastor applies this principle to three areas: governing authorities, the church, and individual Christian living, emphasizing that all work done by believers is God's work and must be conducted with integrity, regardless of the desired outcome.

Intro Prayer

Gracious and loving Heavenly Father, we come before You today with hearts open to Your Word and Your truth. As we gather together to study and discuss Your principles from the book of Nehemiah, we ask that You would prepare our hearts and minds to receive what You want us to learn today. Help us to be honest about areas in our lives where we might be tempted to cut corners or compromise our integrity for the sake of achieving good ends. Open our eyes to see how we can honor You not just in what we accomplish, but in how we accomplish it. Guide our discussion and help us to encourage one another in living lives that are above reproach. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one household chore or task that you're tempted to take shortcuts on, and what usually happens when you do?

Key Verses

1. Nehemiah 5:9
2. Nehemiah 5:11
3. Romans 13:1
4. Hebrews 13:8

Questions

1. What were the specific economic and social problems that the Jewish people were facing in Nehemiah 5, and how were wealthy Jews taking advantage of their poorer brothers?
2. How did Nehemiah respond when he discovered the injustice happening among God's people? What can we learn from his approach of being angry but pondering before acting?
3. The pastor mentioned that 'the way you accomplish a task is as important as the task itself.' Can you think of a time when you've seen this principle either followed or violated in your own

experience?

4. In what areas of life are we most tempted to believe that 'the end justifies the means'? How can we guard against this thinking?
5. How does the principle that 'the end does not justify the means' apply to governing authorities today? What does it look like to hold leaders accountable to God's standards?
6. The pastor emphasized that all work done by Christians is God's work, whether you're a farmer, teacher, business person, or parent. How does this perspective change the way you view your daily responsibilities?
7. What does it mean practically to 'walk in the fear of God' in our workplaces, families, and communities? Give specific examples.
8. How can we as a church ensure that we're accomplishing our mission of helping people find and follow Jesus Christ in the right way, with integrity and love?

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life where you might be tempted to cut corners or compromise your integrity to achieve a desired outcome. Commit to doing that work 'the right way' - with honesty, integrity, and in a manner that honors God, even if it takes longer or costs more. Ask God to help you remember that how you accomplish something is as important as what you accomplish.

Key Takeaways

1. The end does not justify the means - it is impossible to biblically justify bad or sinful behavior, even if it leads to a beneficial outcome
2. Nehemiah demonstrated that the way we accomplish God's work is as important as the work itself, shutting down wall construction until injustices were made right
3. All work done by Christians is God's work, whether in governance, church ministry, or individual callings, and must be conducted with integrity
4. We must be people who live above reproach in every area of life - no lying, cheating, cutting corners, or taking advantage of others
5. True repentance involves not just stopping wrong behavior but making restitution for past wrongs, as the wealthy Jews did in returning what they had unjustly taken

Ending Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for this time of discussion and reflection on Your Word. We are convicted by Nehemiah's example of doing Your work the right way, even when it would have been easier to overlook the injustices happening around him. Help us to be people of integrity in every area of our lives - in our families, our work, our communities, and our church. When we are tempted to take shortcuts or compromise our values for the sake of achieving good ends, remind us that You care deeply about how we accomplish Your work. Give us the courage to speak up against injustice and the wisdom to know how to address wrongs we see around us. May our lives be a testimony to Your character and may others see Christ in us through our commitment to doing things Your way. We commit this week to honoring You not just in what we accomplish, but in how we accomplish it. In Jesus' name, Amen.