

# Anger Management And Conflict Resolution The Way God Intends

Ephesians 4:26-27; Nehemiah 5

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**FOCAL Read Together** **Ephesians 4:26-27** Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: [27] Neither give place to the devil.

One of the oddest disasters in our nation's history happened in Boston, Massachusetts in 1919. At this time in our history molasses was used not only as a sweetener, but it was also distilled into rum and medical alcohol. Alcohol as a beverage was being outlawed throughout the United States, and the Senate had just amended the Constitution putting "prohibition" into effect. The *Purity Distilling Company* had around 2,300,000 gallons of molasses stored in a large tank waiting to be processed at the north end of Boston. No one knows whether it was the stress of the molasses or a spark that ignited it, but this large tank literally exploded. A 15 foot tall wave of molasses went through the town. Traveling at an estimated 35 miles per hour the wave hit the girders of the "Elevated Train" so hard that they broke in two. Twenty one people were killed, and 150 people were injured in the wave.

If you've ever dropped a little bit of molasses on a kitchen counter, or broken a jar of that sweet staff on your floor, you know how hard it is to clean it up. Imagine not one quart jar shattering, but 86 million quarts bursting in your house or in your neighborhood. It took several months to clean up the mess, and even now - on a hot day - the residents of North Boston say that they can smell molasses in the air. Accidents happen. No one planned for that molasses tank to explode. There was no person who actually wanted it to explode. But it did explode, and the results from that explosion wounded people, destroyed lives, and crippled the business.

Churches sometimes explode. No one plans it, but it happens. When people gather together as Churches do they bring not only their good points, but their bad points. People get angry over some amazing things. When a Church explodes it leaves a mess behind that takes months, and perhaps even years to clean up. Just as you can still smell the faint scent of molasses in North Boston, some Churches carry the faint scent of what happened in their past.

If we love the Lord, we do not want our Church to explode. We want it to grow, gathering more and more saved souls to the glory of Christ. We are called by God to remember that ....

**Ephesians 4:25** .... **we are members one of another.**

We'll either go *forward* as one, or we'll go *backward* as one. God wants us to go forward as one. He wants us to *positively influence our world*. This is why the Apostle says:

**Ephesians 4:26-27** **Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: [27] Neither give place to the devil.**

It is *not* a sin to be angry. The Bible says "**be ye angry**". This is the Present Passive Imperative Greek word ORGIZO (οργιζω pronounced *or-gid'-zo*). You could translate this as "**go ahead and receive anger. Let anger come**". There are things that should make us angry. We should be angered at sin in ourselves and in

others. We should be angry at those who ..

**Titus 1:16** ... **profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.**

Jesus was angry at the Pharisees when they said that He couldn't heal a crippled man on the Sabbath (**Mark 3:5**). I suspect that Jesus was angered at the moneychangers that He chased out of the Temple (**John 2:16**). But Jesus always controlled His anger - His anger didn't control Him. God calls His people to be like Jesus.

The difference between an arsonist and a fireman is both *intent* as well as *timing*. The arsonist *intends* to destroy, and therefore takes pleasure in setting fires. The fireman *intends* to protect, so therefore takes pleasure in putting out fires. Be a fireman, not an arsonist.

Control anger and conflict in the way that pleases God our Father.

### **Nehemiah & Conflict Resolution: Nehemiah 5**

One of my favorite Old Testament texts is the Book of Nehemiah. Judah was disobedient to the Lord, so He sent them into captivity for seventy years. Babylon came against God's Judah, and in three waves destroyed that nation and carried its people off into captivity. At the end of their seventy years of bondage the Lord moved on the heart of their conqueror. Three waves destroyed the country, so now God would - over a fourteen year period - send three waves of returnees back into the country.

Nehemiah led the third wave of returnees back to Jerusalem. Nehemiah was not a scholar, nor a king, nor even a priest among Israel. **Nehemiah was a lowly cupbearer to the King.** Yet Nehemiah made himself available to the Lord. When you make yourself available to the Lord, the Lord will equip and use you. Nehemiah sought God's face in prayer, and then asked the King for permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls. The King agreed, and Nehemiah left Persia with letters from the King, a number of returning exiles, and a big job before him.

**ILLUSTRATE** When I was growing up my "tennis shoes" - that's what we called them - often came untied, and at times the laces would get knotted up. When knots formed in the lace sometimes I'd take the time to get the knots out. At other times I'd be so impatient or irritated at those things that I'd cut the knot out. The only problem is, each time I cut a knot out I had less lace to tie my shoes with. I'd work around this by skipping eyelets, maybe by leaving the first two or three eyelets without laces. I learned something through all that. **Never cut what you can untie.** This principle applies not only to little boy's shoes, it also applies to life itself. **Never cut what you can untie.** Work with the knotty problems that come your way. If you want to do great things for God you must be willing to - in love - **never cut what you can untie.**

Conflict can destroy your Church, your Business, even your Family apart. When conflict comes you need to **never cut what you can untie.** Attempt to resolve the problem without **giving Satan a foothold.**

Nehemiah has had problems up to this point. He has had trials from the outside as enemies gathered against the work he was trying to do.

Gene Getz writes<sup>1</sup>: "Up to this point Nehemiah's challenges as a spiritual leader focused primarily on those outside of Judah. But before the walls were finally rebuilt, he encountered the most difficult and intense kind of problem almost every spiritual leader has to face sometime—problems within."

We read:

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 5:1** And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.

Internal conflict had come into the Nehemiah's Church! The Jews were taking advantage of one another. Rather than work together to accomplish the **Kingdom work of God** some of the richer Jews were loaning money to the poorer Jews and charging interest for it. This was a violation of God's Word! The Lord told His Israel:

**Exodus 22:25** If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as a usurer (loan agent who charges interest), neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.

God's Israel was to be reliant upon God. The rich were

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<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah, Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament page 683

not supposed to be loaning money at interest to the poor. The poor were starving, and the rich were getting richer. As a result the poor rose up in anger against their fellow Jews. They were **ready to cut the knot, and to stop doing God's work in building the walls of Jerusalem.**

What did Nehemiah do when this **great cry of the people and of their wives** came up? He taught us that - in resolving conflict - **timing is everything.**

### 1. There Is A Time To Back Off

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 5:6-7** And **I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. [7] Then I consulted with myself ....**

There are two things to note here. First of all, Nehemiah was **very angry** when he heard the cry of the people. This is the Hebrew MEODE KAWRAW (מאוד pronounced *meh-ode'*) + (חרד pronounced *khaw-raw'*). You could translate this as Nehemiah was **extremely hot, burning up, hot with displeasure.**

- Nehemiah didn't *excuse* his anger, he didn't *repress* his anger, nor did he *justify* his anger. Nehemiah *admitted* his anger.

Nehemiah *admitted* his anger. Some people don't admit their anger - the *excuse* it. "Well, I've always had a temper", or "I have a tendency to lose my temper". It

would do well for some people if they *did lose their temper*, for hot headed people can easily destroy the Church of Christ. Others *justify* their temper, saying "It was well that I did this". Others *repress* their anger, so that it builds up like a canker in them, eating at them spiritually and physically. Others still *project their anger* on the innocent, usually on someone in their home.

Nehemiah *admitted* his anger. **He was angry, but did not sin.**

Having admitted his anger to himself Nehemiah "**consulted with myself**". This is the *Niphal Imperfect* of the Hebrew MAWLAK (מלך pronounced *maw-lak'*). The first use of this word in the Bible is found in Genesis 36:31.

**Genesis 36:31** And these *are* the kings that **reigned** in the land of Edom, before there **reigned** any king over the children of Israel.

and here the word is translated as **reigned**. That's what this word means - to **take hold over, to rule over, to reign over**. Nehemiah admitted that he was angry. He then backed off, and *took control over his emotions*. He **reigned over himself**. Dear friends, you cannot do great things for God if you cannot rule your own spirit. The Bible says:

**Proverbs 25:28** He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city *that is* broken down, *and without walls.*

Nehemiah was called by God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God cannot use someone to rebuild the walls if that person's own life "is like a city broken down, and without walls". Nehemiah admitted his anger, and was wise enough to back off until he regained his sense of spiritual balance. Some people get angry - as Nehemiah did - and then go and confront those they are angry at without first backing off. In so doing they cause more problems than solutions, and widen the rift rather than repair it. **Rule your own spirit. Back off, talk with God. Cool off, and never cut what you can untie.**

## 2. There Is A Time To Stand Up

**CONTEXT** **Nehemiah 5:7-8** Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. [8] And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? **Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.**

Nehemiah stood up and rebuked the nobles and the rulers. He did not rebuke them on the basis of his opinion or his own desire, but on the basis of the Word of God.

God gave very explicit directions in His Word on this very matter. He told Israel:

**Leviticus 25:35-40** And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. [36] **Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.** [37] **Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.** [38] **I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.** [39] And if thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: [40] *But* as a hired servant, *and* as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, *and* shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee:

God told the Israelites that "I brought you all out of bondage from Egypt and gave you all this land called Canaan. Fear Me, and do not charge interest to your Brother. Do not make a slave of your Brothers and Sisters as Egypt did." God's people are strangers and foreigners in this world. We are not here to use one another, nor to make money off of one another. Nehemiah told the rich "you have done wrong - you have not feared the Lord your God".

God expects His people to be *peacemakers*. Jesus said:

**Matthew 5:9** **Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.**

The Children of God should be peacemakers. The fruit of

the Spirit is:

**Galatians 5:22-23** ... love, joy, **peace**, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [23] Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

We are to maintain peace - but never at the expense of God's clearly revealed word. Sometimes we fight and feud over things that are *not Scriptural nor eternal*. Churches split over inconsequential things, foolish things that make the world laugh at us. What Nehemiah rebuked the rich for doing wasn't inconsequential, nor a matter of his opinion. He said:

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 5:9** ... **It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?**

**"The world is watching. Our enemies are watching. What example are you giving to the lost?"** Nehemiah stood up, not for nothing, but for God's clearly presented Word. Peter stood up at Pentecost, saying:

**Acts 2:23** [Jesus] was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and **you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.**<sup>NIV</sup>

and three thousand people were won to our faith that day because Peter stood up and preached the truth.

### **3. There Is A Time To Give In**

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 5:10** **I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.**

Nehemiah was saying **"I could have charged them interest, but did not. I beg you - back away from what you are doing"**. He is trying to make the peace. He says **"let US leave off this interest"**. He's putting himself in a position where he identifies with them. **"We're in this together. It is effecting US"**.

There is a time when - in conflict resolution - we need to give in. You will never win every battle. Sometimes it's best to lose a few battles in order to win the war.

In Acts Chapter 6 we read of the first internal battle the early Church experienced.

**Acts 6:1** **And in those days, when the number of the disciples were multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.**

In the early Church there were two groups of Jews. One group were the **Hellenistic or Greek Jews**, and the other group was the **Hebraic or Hebrew Jews**. The Hellenistic Jews began to believe that the Apostles were giving more attention to the Hebraic Jews widows than they were their own widows. The Apostles said:

**Acts 6:2-4** ... **It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. [3] Wherefore,**

brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. [4] But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

The Apostles told the crowd to pick out *seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom*. These men would oversee the tables, thus freeing up God's pastors to **prayer and ministry of the Word**. The crowd picked out seven men:

**Acts 6:5-6** And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: [6] Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their hands on them*.

What is interesting about this is that *every man chosen is a Hellenistic Jew*. These are **Greek names**. Seven deacons were chosen, not one was a Hebraic Jew - and the Apostles didn't even blink. They ordained them just as they said they would - and trouble was averted.

**Nehemiah was leading by example**. He said **"I could have charged interest - but didn't. Follow me."**

What's more important? Winning every battle, or seeing the wall completed? God's work is always the most important thing.

#### 4. There Is A Time To Reach Out

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 5:15-19** But the former governors that *had been* before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bore rule over the people: but **so did not I, because of the fear of God**. [16] Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants *were* gathered thither unto the work. [17] Moreover *there were* at my table a hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that *are* about us. [18] Now *that* which was prepared *for me* daily *was* one ox *and* six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: **yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people**. [19] Think upon me, my God, for good, **according to all that I have done for this people**.

As a Governor of the people Nehemiah had the right - according to Persian law - to exact payment from the people. He could have taxed the people. Yet Nehemiah gave up many of his rights and privileges in order to keep the work going forward. He reached out. He gave heavily out of his own pocket.

That which is most important is that the wall be built. Oh, that every Church in our land were filled with Nehemiah's! Nehemiah never **gave place to the devil**, but loved the people and loved His Lord as he worked to do God's work. If you are born again by faith in Christ,

then you should have the mind of Christ:

**Philippians 2:2-5** Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. [3] *Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. [4] Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. [5] Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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**Responsive Reading** **Ephesians 4:26-27** Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: [27] Neither give place to the devil.

**Ephesians 4:25; Ephesians 4:26-27; Titus 1:16**

**Nehemiah & Conflict Resolution: Nehemiah 5**

**Nehemiah 5:1; Exodus 22:25**

- What did Nehemiah do when this **great cry of the people and of their wives** came up? He taught us that - in resolving conflict - \_\_\_\_\_

**1. There Is A Time To Back Off**

**Nehemiah 5:6-7; Genesis 36:31; Proverbs 25:28**

- - Nehemiah didn't \_\_\_\_\_ his anger, he didn't \_\_\_\_\_ his anger, nor did he \_\_\_\_\_ his anger. Nehemiah \_\_\_\_\_ his anger.

- Nehemiah "**consulted with myself**". This is the *Niphal Imperfect* of the Hebrew MAWLAK (מַלַּךְ pronounced *maw-lak'*). \_\_\_\_\_

**2. There Is A Time To Stand Up**

**Nehemiah 5:7-8; Leviticus 25:35-40; Matthew 5:9; Galatians 5:22-23; Nehemiah 5:9; Acts 2:23**

- Nehemiah did not rebuke the Jews on the basis of his

opinion or his own desire, but \_\_\_\_\_

**3. There Is A Time To Give In**

**Nehemiah 5:10; Acts 6:1; Acts 6:2-4; Acts 6:5-6**

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**4. There Is A Time To Reach Out**

**Nehemiah 5:15-19; Philippians 2:2-5**

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