

SESSION 1



**A REAL MAN BETTERS GOD'S
WORLD: *HIS CHARACTER***

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1. Better Men Are World-Changing Men

A. What does it mean to be a world-changing man?

- A world-changing man:
 1. Is a **particular** kind of man.
 2. Is a particular kind of man who **intentionally** affects others for good.
 3. Is a particular kind of man who intentionally affects others for good in their immediate **world**.

B. You can only be a world-changing man if you are a man who is **changing**.

“The most important thing about a man is not what he does, it is who he becomes.”
– Dallas Willard

2 Timothy 2:20-21:

“Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.”

- In Scripture, we meet a man who had the character to be a world-changing man in the world around him:
[Nehemiah was called by God to leave a great job (Nehemiah 1:11) and rebuild the city walls of his hometown, Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:3-8a; 2:9-3:32). Nehemiah knew God was with him (2:8b). He also found out that it wouldn't be easy, and he would face strong opposition (4:1-32). With that in mind, through Nehemiah's life we see four vital traits a man must have as he changes the world around him...]

2. World-Changing Men Listen to Those Who Are Hurting

A. A real man pays attention to the hurting people in his life and doesn't **dismiss** them.

Nehemiah 5:1-6:

“Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives...I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words...”

“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.” – Ernest Hemingway

- Our love for God is reflected in our ability to have an open heart to the needs of hurting people around us.

1 John 3:17:

“But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?”

B. A real man lets himself **feel** the pain of others.

Romans 12:15b:

“...weep with those who weep.”

“I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the wounded person.”
– Walt Whitman

- Practicing empathy can evoke feelings of anger. A real man has righteous, not **unrighteous**, anger.
- The Hebrew word for “angry” also means “to burn.” Nehemiah shows us that there is a place for righteous anger:

Nehemiah 5:6:

“I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words...”

“A vigorous temper is not altogether an evil. Men who are as easy as an old shoe are generally of as little worth.” – Charles H. Spurgeon

C. Righteous anger is not based on personal offense or inconvenience. That kind of anger is self-centered. Archbishop Desmond Tutu said:

“Righteous anger is usually not about oneself. It is about those whom one sees being harmed and whom one wants to help. In short, righteous anger is a tool of justice, a scythe of compassion, more than a reactive emotion. Although it may have its roots deep in our fight-or-flight desire to protect those in our family or group who are threatened, it is a chosen response and not simply an uncontrollable reaction. And it is not about one’s own besieged self-image, or one’s feelings of separation, but of one’s collective responsibility, and one’s feeling of deep, empowering connection.”

- Righteous anger is directed at injustice because God’s creation and glory are despised. This is the kind of anger that Jesus had as people were defaming God’s temple:

Matthew 21:13-14:

“And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

- Righteous anger is not an **option**. Paul David Tripp says it well, righteous anger:

“is a calling for people who claim to be living for something bigger than their own happiness, who are committed to ministry, and who profess to do what’s right, true, loving, and good. You can’t be like God and be free of anger as long as you live in a sin-broken world.”

3. World-Changing Men Confront the Wrong Around Them and in Them

A. All confrontations with injustices must be self-controlled. Like Nehemiah, we need to think before we act:

Nehemiah 5:7-13:

“I took counsel with myself... I also shook out the fold of my [own] garment...”

- Unfortunately, our anger as men is usually the wrong kind of anger.
- Proverbs warns us that “*A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.*” – Proverbs 25:28
- Men and women both get angry, but studies show that men tend to act out in more **aggressive** ways. According to a 2003 St John’s University study, “*...men scored higher on physical aggression, passive aggression and*

experiences of impulsively dealing with their anger. They also more often had a revenge motive to their anger and scored higher on coercing other people.”

B. If you are willing to confront the wrong in others, you must be willing to confront the wrong in yourself.

- Nehemiah admits his own complicity in oppression. He teaches us to be equal opportunity offenders in our correction, even if the offender is ourselves:

Nehemiah 5:10:

“Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest...”

- Jesus reinforces this practice of self-assessment before we look at the sins of others:

Matthew 7:3-5:

“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

- Personal humility is necessary when confronting someone else’s sin. Before you judge the sin of another, first repent of the sin in your life. *“When God shows us a particular sin that we are guilty of, He doesn’t tell us to take our time dealing with it. No, He says, ‘deal with it NOW!’ When we realize what we are doing wrong, now is the time to stop it.” – Charles Swindoll*

4. World-Changing Men Sacrifice Their Lives and Resources for the Benefit of Others

A. Putting your needs behind the needs of others is a mark of a world-changing man.

Nehemiah 5:14-18:

“Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor... Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. Now what was prepared at my expense...”

- Such sacrifice shows that you are different than the rest of the world. *“I think that the good and the great are only separated by their willingness to sacrifice.” - Kareem Abdul Jabbar*

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” - Martin Luther King Jr.

- Such sacrifice shows that you are thinking like Jesus.

Philippians 2:3-5:

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others

more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus”

“We are called to be world changers, not world chasers.” - Jared Wilson

B. Using what God has blessed you with to bless others is a mark of a world-changing man.

- The early church modeled what many of us miss: **communal generosity**.
Acts 4:34-35:

“There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”

“Giving is the highest expression of potency.” - Dallas Willard

C. Communal living should ultimately be driven by a reverence for the God who created you and those you are sacrificing for. Nehemiah said, Nehemiah 5:15b:

“Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.”

- A great example of sacrificial living is seen in the churches of Macedonia commended by Paul in 2 Corinthians. We read in 2 Corinthians 8:3-5, “For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves **first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.**”
- Generosity starts with an orientation to **God** and then produces a generous heart toward **others**.

5. World-Changing Men Give the Glory to God

Nehemiah 5:19:

“Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.”

A. God is your great rewarder.

Matthew 6:1-4:

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

- Real men are content to do what is right without the applause of man.
- Real men focus on living **Coram Deo** (before the face of God). They want to live for God—they are not worried about the approval of man.

- Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for being more concerned about getting approval and praise from others rather than God:
John 12:43:
“For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”
- The true test of a man’s **character** is what he does when no one is watching.
“*Character is what a man is in the dark.*” - D. L. Moody

Your Table Discussion Questions

1. Empathy is the ability to step into someone’s pain—to share the feelings of another. Why do you think men (generally) struggle to exercise empathy? Are you very empathetic? Explain.
2. In two or three sentences, explain the difference between righteous and unrighteous anger.
3. Eugene Peterson said the secret to the Christian life is “*congruency*,” when what we profess to believe dictates how we live. Where is your life congruent? Where is it not?

Your “BetterMan” Reflection:

Before our next session, take a moment this week to sit and listen to someone. As they open up, do not offer advice, do not interject your own story, do not try to fix anything—just listen. What did you learn about that person that you might have missed otherwise? Write your answer in the space below.