

COMPASSION COUNTS

SCRIPTURE - Nehemiah 5

ACTIVITY MATERIALS (Optional):

Pretend campfire, blankets, flashlights, and any other camping items you wish to use.

CRAFT MATERIAL:

Several pages of blank paper, markers (colored pencils or crayons), scissors, and a stapler.

Introduction:

Invite the children to gather in a circle (optional: around a pretend campfire sitting on blankets as sleeping bags). Instruct the children that you will be pretending to camp out. Spend a few minutes discussing all the fun parts of camping. Then ask the children if there is anything about camping that scares them.

ACTIVITY:

Allow each child a turn to pretend to be afraid or upset about one of the negative things mentioned earlier. Instruct the other child/children to comfort them/help them during their time of distress or need. (for example if a child is afraid of the dark the other child could offer them words of reassurance and a flashlight). The most important thing is that these comforts/helps are offered with love.

Explain that when you care for someone else you also care when they are upset and you want to help make it right.

Say: Have you ever been upset about something someone did to you, or have you been hurt by someone? When someone comes along and talks to you about it, comforts you, or offers you help does it make you feel better or worse? Does it help you to feel loved?

When you talk to someone who is upset, help someone in need, and show love to others in hard situations that is showing compassion.

There are a lot of people in this world that show compassion. Parents, friends, teachers, nurses, doctors, etc. But today we are going to talk about Nehemiah and the compassion he showed to the Israelites in need.

SCRIPTURE - Nehemiah 5:1-19

Before getting started with reading/retelling the scripture, review who Nehemiah was and what has happened up until this point.

The Israelites were rebuilding the wall despite the efforts of Sandballat and other leaders. But as they were working hard to build the wall many of their families were left without food or family members to work and this put the Israelites outside of the city in a hard position. Several families felt forced to sell their children into slavery to wealthy Israelites in order to try and save their farms, homes, and the rest of their family. Now they didn't do this because they didn't want their children, they actually did it to try and help their children. Their plan was to earn enough money in order to buy their children back. But there was a problem, they couldn't earn enough money and the sad thing was the wealthy Israelites knew that. They knew they would get to keep the children as slaves to work for them and when the families couldn't pay they could also get their farms/homes. The wealthy Israelites saw people in need but instead of helping (having compassion) they took advantage of the situation. When Nehemiah found this out he was furious. Nehemiah didn't react out of anger. He took time to think, and we have learned that Nehemiah always prayed before acting. Nehemiah went to talk to the wealthy Israelites and told them they were doing the wrong thing. But he didn't yell at them or call them ugly names, he actually showed compassion to the wealthy Israelites (even though they weren't showing compassion to the poor Israelites) by explaining that what they were doing was wrong. He told them about how he was using his own money (not the people's money) to help those in need rather than take from what little they had. Nehemiah urged the wealthy Israelites to give the people back their land and their children and they did just that.

Q: *Who was building the walls?*

A: *The Israelites*

Q: *If the men were building the walls, who was left to work the farms/take care of the land?*

A: *Mothers and children.*

Q: *What happened when families couldn't afford their land/homes?*

A: *They sold their children into slavery.*

Q: *Who did they sell their children to?*

A: *The wealthy Israelites.*

Q: *How did Nehemiah feel about this when he found out? Why?*

A: *He was angry. They were all God's people. They should have been taking care of one another not taking advantage of the weak.*

Q: *What did Nehemiah do?*

A: *He prayed then he talked to the wealthy Israelites.*

Q: *What did the Israelites do?*

A: *They gave the families back their children and their property.*

CRAFT:

Invite the children to make a compassion book. Cut several pieces of paper in half. Instruct the children to come up with ways to show compassion and have them write and or illustrate each way on a piece of paper. When finished, help the children make a cover page and staple the book together.

CLOSING:

It is often easy to just think of ourselves but that isn't what God calls us to do. God calls us to care for others. Nehemiah took the time to talk to God but he also took the time to help God's people whenever and however he could. It is important for us to show God's love and one of the best ways for us to do that is to show compassion.

PRAYER TIME

Take a few moments to thank God for his blessings. Pray for your family. Pray for our church. Pray for our country and its leaders. Pray that God will help you show compassion to those around you this week. Look for ways you can show God's love.

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

Lead Nehemiah to Jerusalem
so he can rebuild the walls.

