



The Week of August 14, 2022
The Bystander or the Advocate
Pilate vs. Nehemiah
Conversation Guide

This Week's Take-Aways

- Goodness: (Galatians 6:9-10) I will seek to do good to others even at great cost to myself.
- I show great compassion: (Psalm 82:3-4) I actively show my caring for those who are vulnerable in real and tangible ways.

Intro Questions

- Who has been your greatest helper when you were in need?
- Have you ever felt abandoned when in need?
- Have you ever seen someone in need and looked the other way? How did that make you feel? Did it affect how you responded the next time you saw someone in need?

The Bystander: Pilate

John 19:1-16

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers also twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and clothed him in a purple robe. And they kept coming up to him and saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" and were slapping his face.

Pilate went outside again and said to them, "Look, I'm bringing him out to you to let you know I find no grounds for charging him." Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

When the chief priests and the temple servants saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Pilate responded, "Take him and crucify him yourselves, since I find no grounds for charging him."

"We have a law," the Jews replied to him, "and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever. He went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus did not give him an answer. So Pilate said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?"

"You would have no authority over me at all," Jesus answered him, "if it hadn't been given you from above. This is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."

From that moment Pilate kept trying to release him. But the Jews shouted, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!"

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge's seat in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Aramaic, Gabbatha). It was the preparation day for the Passover, and it was about noon. Then he told the Jews, "Here is your king!"

They shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

Pilate said to them, "Should I crucify your king?" "We have no king but Caesar!" the chief priests answered.

Then he handed him over to be crucified. Then they took Jesus away.

- What was the dilemma that Pilate faced? What choices were before him?
- What advantage did he see in making the choice he did?
 - Was it really an advantage?
- "No matter what the hardship they witness, a bystander sees it as someone else's problem. They don't want to get involved." How does Pilate fulfill Pastor David's definition of a bystander?
- Who did Pilate view as the ultimate authority in this situation? How would he have acted differently if he understood that God was the ultimate authority?
- Have you fallen prey to peer pressure and chose to be the bystander instead of taking a bold stand?
 - How can trust in God help us to take a stand and not cave like Pilate did?

The advocate: Nehemiah

Check out this video for an overview of the book of Nehemiah- <https://youtu.be/MkETkRv9tG8>

Nehemiah 1:1–2:8 (ESV)

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it." And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

- What was Nehemiah's first response when he heard about the state of Jerusalem?
 - What issues do you need to be praying and fasting over?
 - Why was confession of his (and his father's) sins an integral part of Nehemiah's time of prayer and fasting?
 - How did this equip him for what he did next?

- What kind of risk was Nehemiah taking by going to King Artaxerxes about Jerusalem? How did God honor his boldness?
 - What allowed Nehemiah to have this boldness?
- What did Nehemiah do when the king asked him “What is your request”?
 - How can we cultivate this practice in our lives?
 - How would praying during conversations change how you respond?
- How can we be leader-advocates in our daily lives?

Next Steps

- What burden has God given you that you need to take action on? Start by praying over it! Discover the next step He has for you and DO IT!
- Consider a family movie night of [Blue Miracle](#). Available on Netflix. Click the link for more viewing options. Discuss how the protagonists took action and were advocates in a difficult time.