



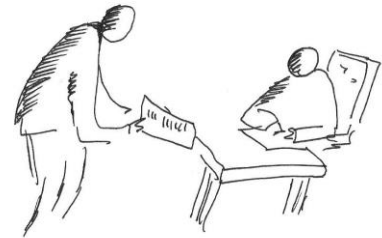
## B REVEALING WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

# Being an advocate



## Why use this Bible study?

This Bible study can help us explore some of what the Bible teaches about advocacy – influencing the decisions, policies and practices of powerful decision-makers in order to bring about change.



## Learning from Nehemiah and Moses

**Read Nehemiah 1-2 and Exodus 2-5.** These stories about Nehemiah and Moses show that there are various stages and approaches to learn from, when acting as an advocate.

**Awareness:** Firstly, to be an advocate we need to be aware of the situations of others and to feel compassion for them (Nehemiah 1:1-4 and Exodus 2:11).

**The right preparation:** Once aware of the needs, it may be tempting to rush straight in and try to help people (Exodus 2:11-15). But it is not until years later that Moses is called by God to go to Pharaoh and bring God's people, the Israelites, out of Egypt (Exodus 3:7-14). Moses has many questions, but in the end he returns to Egypt. Nehemiah's approach is first to seek the counsel of God with many days of prayer and fasting (Nehemiah 1:4-6). On arrival at Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:11-16), he takes stock of the situation before the work begins.

**Counting the cost:** Both Moses and Nehemiah could have remained in their comfortable positions, isolated from the difficulties of the people – Moses as Pharaoh's daughter's son (Exodus 2:10) and Nehemiah as cupbearer to the King in the citadel of Susa (Nehemiah 1:1,11). Both gave up their own security and privileged positions to defend and help those whose needs were brought to their notice.

**Working with others:** God also prepares others to be part of the process. Nehemiah is looked on with favour by the King in his mission and provided with the assistance he requests (Nehemiah 2:1-9). Once the building of the walls begins (Nehemiah 3), each group is responsible for building or repairing one section. Moses is given the help of Aaron and the support of the Israelite leaders (Exodus 4:27-31).

**Dealing with resistance:** Nehemiah and Moses face considerable resistance as they try to change the situation of the people (Nehemiah 2:10, 19-20; Exodus 5 onwards). They handle those who have doubts or needs with sensitivity. They react to hard-heartedness and disdain with firmness. Everything is constantly referred back to God in prayer.

Awareness-raising

Children &amp; youth

Climate &amp; environment

Conflict &amp; peace-building

Corruption &amp; governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination &amp; inclusion

Food &amp; livelihoods

Gender &amp; sexual violence

Health &amp; HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration &amp; trafficking

Water, sanitation &amp; hygiene

## Expectations and faith

If what we are doing is God's plan, it will succeed, however daunting the task seems and despite our own weaknesses – in fact God seems to prefer working in impossible situations so that the glory goes to him! (Exodus 12:50-51, 14:29-31 and Nehemiah 6:15-16). The Lord will fulfil his purposes. Do you believe this?

### Key points

- We should take time to listen and observe the needs of others.
- We should seek wisdom in when and how to speak out.
- It is often essential to work with others for effective advocacy.

## Questions for discussion

### Awareness

- How can we make time to be good listeners and observers?
- Who might God be prompting you to help?

### Preparation

- Do you decide your actions through prayer or do you simply do what you think is best?
- Are you prepared to wait for God's timing?
- Do you believe that if God has called you, he will equip you despite your inadequacies?
- Do you take the time to be sure you know the real situation on the ground?

### Counting the cost

- Have you counted the cost of coming to the aid of others?
- Are you willing to make any sacrifices involved?

### Working with others

- Have you identified others to work alongside?
- Are you using all the available resources?
- Have you divided the tasks clearly so that each person can play their part?

### Dealing with resistance

- How are you handling any opposition you face?
- How do you deal with the doubts and concerns of those you are trying to help?

## Notes

This Bible study was written by Rose Robinson and first published in: Tearfund (2000) Footsteps: Advocacy [http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_41-50/footsteps\\_45/](http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_41-50/footsteps_45/)

### Related tools

- B – Being an advocate (Bible study) [*B: Influencing decision-makers-2*]
- B – Fighting injustice (Bible study) [*B: Influencing decision-makers-3*]
- B – The role of the church in advocacy (Bible study) [*B: Influencing decision-makers-4*]
- C1 – Ways of taking action [*C1: Awareness-raising-1*]
- C1 – Making the most of meetings with decision-makers [*C1: Influencing decision-makers-4*]
- C1 – Mobilising people [*C1: Influencing decision-makers-2*]