



BUILDING
BLOCKS of
SPIRITUAL
LEADERSHIP

Lessons from Nehemiah

Compiled and edited by
David L. Flowers

A Global Association of Theological Studies Publication

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Lesson 1

How God Chooses Leaders

By David L. Flowers

Key Verse

“I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:4).

Leadership Qualities

Prayerful, spiritual, compassionate, faithful, responsible, self-disciplined, loyal

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

How does God choose leaders? How do people become the leaders God wants them to be? What qualities must be cultivated to become spiritual leaders? It has been said that to be a good leader one must be a good follower. When is one being a good follower?

How Leadership Begins

One day as Nehemiah was in the palace in Shushan, he met one of his brothers named Hanani along with certain others of the men of Judah. Nehemiah inquired concerning the welfare of the Jews who were in Jerusalem. In response, Hanani and the others began to describe the great affliction and reproach of the

people of Jerusalem. They further described the broken walls and burned gates of the city.

Concern for People

At this point one of the great traits of Nehemiah becomes obvious. He was concerned about people. Notice that Nehemiah was not seeking for a “position” or a “career.” He was compassionate. Genuine concern for people and their needs, or compassion, is one of the first requirements of a leader. A true spiritual leader will not enter his or her work with selfish motives.

When Nehemiah heard the report of his brethren concerning those in Jerusalem, he took time to consider their needs. He responded with weeping and mourning. Further, he prayed and fasted until he saw the urgency of their condition. He began to see the hopelessness of his people as they faced their future.

Many people never stop to consider the needs of others. In the spiritual work of today’s church, leaders must consider the people’s eternal destiny. So many people have never heard the truth that will save them from Hell. Spiritual leaders must clearly see the eternal fate of the unsaved. It is then they will see why Jesus died on the cross. Only then can they understand the true nature and work of the church.

Responsibility

Nehemiah already had a job with responsibility. He was the cupbearer to the king. God chooses people who are responsible and know how to accept responsibility.

God usually does not choose to use lazy people or those who constantly complain. He will not choose to use individuals who are habitually late or who always blame other people for their own failures. God’s choice for a leader is to use a person who has already demonstrated self-discipline, faithfulness, and loyalty.

Responsible people can see a problem and take steps to do something about it. They know how to initiate steps of action within their sphere of activity. They will be found busy in the areas assigned to them.

Examples for Discussion

- Moses—shepherding his father-in-law's sheep
- Joshua—serving Moses
- David—shepherding his father's sheep
- Elisha—plowing in the field
- Peter, Andrew, James, and John—fishing in the Sea of Galilee

Strong in Faith

Many years earlier, the Babylonians had led Nehemiah's nation into captivity. When the Persians defeated the Babylonians, the Hebrew captives were transferred to Persian control. Nehemiah had grown up as a captive. The enslaved Jews had faced many challenges. Many times their enemies had tried to destroy them. However, as a nation they had nurtured a strong faith in God. It was their faith that had enabled them to overcome and persevere throughout their captivity. (For an example, see the story of Esther.) They maintained their worship, the reading of the Scriptures, and their identity because they adapted to their circumstances and continually built their faith in God. Nehemiah had learned all these lessons as a captive.

Spiritual leaders must be stalwart in what they believe. They must know doctrine and be strong in it. First Timothy 4:16 says, "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Leaders must know the requirements of salvation. People are depending upon them to know the truth. They must preach the whole gospel of salvation: repentance, baptism in Jesus' name for the remission of sins, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. True leaders will have already proven that their lives are examples of holiness before they are called to fill any position.

People who are weak in their faith will be weak leaders. People who follow weak leaders rarely become strong in their faith because their leader's faith is not strong. Jesus said that if a blind person tries to lead someone else who is blind, they both will fall into the ditch. If weak leaders try to lead, both they and the people they lead will stumble and fail.

It is required that leaders be strong in their faith if they are going to be able to lead people. Their faith will become an example to their people. Hebrews 13:7 states, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken

unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

Faithfulness

Second Timothy 2:2 states, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Nehemiah had shown himself to be faithful both in spiritual things and in the responsibilities of this earthly life. Now God was ready to promote him to become a leader of the Jews.

In Luke 16:10-13, Jesus described how a leader is promoted in His kingdom. He said in verse 10, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”

People should ask themselves:

- Have I been faithful to God? To my employer? To my pastor? To my spouse? To my family?
- Am I dependable?
- Do I carry out my responsibilities—even if my boss is not present and others are not watching?
- Am I trustworthy? Do I cheat someone if I think I can get away with it? Do I misuse money or property if I think no one will find out?

In Luke 16:11, Jesus said, “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will you commit to your trust the true riches?” Unrighteous mammon can be defined as the matters that pertain to this world. Dishonesty and deceitfulness in the use of the things of this world disqualify a person from being a spiritual leader to whom God can entrust “true riches.” True riches are benefits of the gospel, eternal life, fruitful ministry, or even the care for the souls of people.

Joseph’s Faithfulness

Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, exemplifies someone who was faithful in the things of this world (unrighteous mammon) and then received true riches. He was faithful to his father and was chosen to wear the coat of many

colors. He was faithful to Potiphar, and Potiphar promoted him to become steward of his house and all his property. Joseph was even faithful while he was in jail and became one who cared for the other prisoners. He had proven beyond any question that he could be trusted in almost any situation. It was then that God promoted him to become ruler over all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. By being faithful, Joseph was in the right position at the right time to be used of God to save his family and the nation from which the Messiah was promised to come.

God and Mammon

Only by faithfulness in earthly things can people prove that they are qualified to be a leader in God's kingdom. Only then will God give "true riches" to them.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Can God trust me to do what I should for Him without being watched?
- Can God trust me to become what He wants me to become?
- Why do I want to be a leader?
- Do I look at the ministry of pastor or evangelist as a job or a career by which I may receive a good income?
- If I had a church averaging one hundred in attendance, which could adequately support me, would I continue to put the same effort into soulwinning as I did when I started ministering?
"And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:12).
- Can my employer trust me with his things and know that everything will be handled properly?
- Am I trying to build the kingdom of God even though I am not a pastor now?
- Do I work with my pastor in the winning of souls?

In Luke 16:13, Jesus stated a rule about service: "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." In other words, God requires whole-hearted devotion and commitment to Him and His

work. To be an effective spiritual leader, a person's service to others must be as though he is serving God alone.

To gain money cannot be a leader's motive. If he or she really wants to serve God, he or she will do so with or without money. If she makes money, she will serve God with her money by paying tithes and giving offerings. She will do this first. She will not wait to see if there is anything left. He or she will put God first.

To have a position cannot be a leader's motive. If she puts God first, she will serve God whether she has a position or not. She will make herself a servant to those who have positions and try to help them become successful.

The reason this is true is that the leaders are serving God. By serving others, they are serving God. By giving to others, they are giving to God. Seeing the kingdom of God grow and advance is reward enough within itself.

Character

Someone said that people always look for better methods, but God looks for better people. When God chooses a leader, He looks for a person of character. He is not concerned with what we look like, how much money we have, or what our talents or abilities may be. A person can use these to serve God, but they do not qualify him or her to be a servant of God.

People can focus on things like position or place. They may focus on external circumstances such as money, equipment, or the lack of these things. They may allow problems, real or imagined, to hinder them. Or they can always blame someone else for obstructing their service to God.

God will focus on things like a person's prayer life, faithfulness, and personal values. He will examine how well one accepts responsibility and one's concern for people. He will want to know if that person is determined to serve Him or not. Or is that individual the kind of person who is here today and gone tomorrow? Is he the kind of person who can follow God-given leadership? A man will be required to follow before he can lead. God will know his character. He will know what he is really like.

Summary

How can a person become a leader? Here are some suggestions:

- Identify a need. Nehemiah did this through hearing the report of his brethren.
- Look at the need and study it. Learn all you can about it. Ask questions. Find all the information possible about it.
- Study the Word of God with the need in mind. Find out what God says about the need. Particularly, study what God says about the leader's role in meeting the need.
- Get involved with the need by prayer. God does nothing except in answer to prayer.
- Pray until you have something that you can give to meet the need. Pray until you can see that need in the same way God sees it.
- Commit yourself to pray until the need is met.
- Get involved at some level with working for God about that need.

Until you can become involved in this way, you will not be able to be a leader.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Describe Nehemiah's response to the news concerning the conditions of Jerusalem and the Jews. _____

2. How is Nehemiah an example of a spiritual man? _____

3. Discuss the role of prayer in the call that Nehemiah received from God.

4. How did Nehemiah demonstrate compassion? _____

5. Describe a "responsible" person. _____

6. Define *loyalty*. _____

7. Give three reasons leaders must be strong in the faith.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

8. Describe the danger of following a weak leader. _____

9. Write completely the verses found in Luke 16:10-13, thinking of yourself as you do so. _____

10. Define the term "unrighteous mammon." _____

11. What are the things that a person must be faithful in before God will give him or her "true riches"? _____

12. Define the term "true riches." _____

13. What is the key idea for a person who wants to be an effective spiritual leader? _____

14. How does a spiritual leader serve God? _____

15. People search for better _____ while God searches for better _____.

16. Define *self-discipline*. _____

17. List six things that people tend to focus on when they discuss leadership.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____

18. List eight things that God focuses on when He considers potential leaders.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
- G. _____
- H. _____

19. List six things you can do now that will allow you to be involved with a need and will help you prepare to be a leader.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____

Lesson 2

Compassion: A “Must Have” in Spiritual Leadership

By James A. Crumpacker

Key Verse

“Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned” (Nehemiah 1:6).

Leadership Qualities

Compassion, prayerfulness, honest self-examination, self-motivation, spiritual values

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Something motivates people to do what they do. That motivation could be as simple as hunger or as complex as the desire for power and fame. Leaders need to take a close look at their life and evaluate what motivates them to be engaged in God’s work. In the often thankless and unrecognized responsibilities of spiritual leadership, the right motivation must come from within a person’s own heart.

Spiritual leaders must have an unquenchable fire in their heart to see the salvation of the lost. Without this, all other motivations will soon fade away. Leaders need to take a close look at themselves and evaluate what is driving them to be engaged in God's work. If they do not have compassion for the lost, they will not endure the hardships they will meet. They will not last long enough to see the victories that are in store for the faithful.

The Good Life

Nehemiah's personal life could not have been much better. He had been blessed. He was able to take care of his family. His personal needs were well taken care of. Most likely, he lived in a good home, probably near the palace. He had a good job and plenty of food. Members of his family likely attended a good school, and he had the respect of his fellow Jews. His personal life was in order. He really lacked nothing.

A Report from Jerusalem

Then he heard the report from Jerusalem about the living conditions of the people. He became so emotionally upset that he wept. He decided to go without food as he gave himself to much prayer for his people and his city. He did not know the people personally. He had never been to Jerusalem before. His emotional reaction occurred because Nehemiah was a man full of compassion.

The modern world is in a condition similar to the people of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's time. Society has broken down. Lawlessness abounds. Hunger is commonplace. Disease and death touch every family. People are without hope.

Consider:

- What kind of response do you have today when you see the conditions of your nation, your people, and the world around you?
 - Are you troubled by what you see and hear?
 - Does this affect you?
 - Does this diminish your appetite?
 - Does this force you to prayer?
- If not, then you should re-examine your motives for being involved in spiritual leadership.

The Good Samaritan

In Luke 10 Jesus told the story of a man called “the Good Samaritan.” One day, as he journeyed, he saw something that made him change his plans. He really did not have time for this. It was not in his program. However, seeing a person in need caused him to alter his well-thought-out journey.

The only thing that motivated him to do what he did was what he saw. He saw the needs of this unfortunate man. The “Good Samaritan” did not have any prior relationship with this man. He did not even know the man’s name. He did not stop to consider if he would be repaid for the expenses of caring for the man. Compassion welled up within his heart, causing him to want to help this man simply because of the man’s condition. He focused on the needs of this robbery victim who had been wounded and left for dead. He realized that he had the ability to help this man—if he would just take the time to do so. Compassion in the “Good Samaritan’s” heart saved the life of the man who had fallen among thieves.

Many times leaders do not have the ability to respond to all the needs they see. However, do they desire to meet those needs?

Consider:

- Does it trouble your heart when you see a small child leading a blind parent in town from shop to shop?
- Do you feel sorry for people who have a more difficult life than you do?
- Do you wish you could help them all?

Prayer

Nehemiah’s first response was to pray. He knew he could not change the conditions of Jerusalem by his own power. He recognized he was not a person with those kinds of abilities. He was just feeling sorry in his heart. For the first time, he was seeing clearly the spiritual condition of his nation.

Nehemiah knew that sin was the cause of Israel’s trouble. Spiritual leaders must be able to see clearly the spiritual condition of the person in need before they see the physical or material problems. To rebuild the walls of Jerusalem was not Nehemiah’s first idea or desire. At this point, Nehemiah had a heavy heart

for his people. He began confessing the past sins of his people and nation. His prayer of repentance and confession got him in touch with God.

Personal Risk

Nehemiah's compassion did not stop with prayer, fasting, and confession of sins. Compassion forced him to speak to the king about the report he had heard from Jerusalem. This was a personal risk to himself. What if the king reacted by thinking, "Why should my cupbearer be more concerned about the Jews than about me? I pay him good money to make sure there is no poison in my drink and food so that he can take care of his family. But it seems that he is not as interested in my well-being as he is in those Jews who live in Jerusalem, those who have been my country's enemies for so many years. He cares more about my enemies than he does about me."

True leaders who really care about others will risk
their well-being to help them.

Needed: Self-examination

People who are trying to be leaders may wonder why people do not follow them like people followed Paul. They are striving to be spiritual leaders like Paul, but not many are interested in following them. They must examine themselves. Do they feel as strongly about lost people as Paul did? In Romans 9:3, Paul said that he cared so much for the unsaved that he was willing to be lost if all Israel could be saved. That is how compassion affected Paul. People are not fooled easily. They know if a leader genuinely cares for them or not.

Some people are born with more compassion in their hearts than others. Mother Teresa, the famous Catholic nun who worked all her life with the poor and disabled of India, is an example of a person filled with compassion. A story says a tourist visited the place where she was working one day in India. As Mother Teresa was putting bandages on the open wounds of a leper, the visitor said, "I would not do that for a million dollars." Mother Teresa looked at her and said, "Neither would I." Nevertheless, she was willing to do it for nothing or very little because she had compassion. Compassion will drive leaders to do things they never thought would be possible for them to do in their life.

When Jesus Comes into Your Heart

Maybe a leader was not born with a heart filled with love and tenderness. Perhaps her mother and father did not teach her to care for others. However, when a person receives the Holy Ghost, she receives the Spirit of Christ. (See Galatians 3:27; 2:20; Romans 8:9.) She receives Christ's compassion for the lost world. (See Matthew 20:34; 23:37; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13.) Jesus cared for people. He felt their hunger and their grief. He taught them until He was exhausted. He blessed their children until the disciples thought it had become too much and tried to stop them. When people get Jesus in their heart, they get all His love and concern for others.

What leaders do with that compassion for others that Jesus puts within them when they receive the Holy Ghost is up to them. Some people let it die. They are just hoping to make it to Heaven. Others let it control their whole life. They do what they do because of the compassion of the Holy Ghost.

Over time, some spiritual leaders allow true compassion to be replaced with other things like the desire to have power over other people, greed, selfish interests, pride, or better methods. Their desire is not to help people quite so much as they want to have a large church. So they find other methods that work. They replace compassion with methods. Church growth methods are not bad or evil, but they should never replace your love for souls.

The Holy Ghost Makes a Difference

Once a student came to a Bible school. He was older than most of the other students even though he had just graduated from secondary school. He did not talk much, and the other students did not know much about him. He had been baptized in Jesus' name, but he had not received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. After a few months in Bible school, he began to tell his story.

He was a native of Sweden. At the age of fourteen, he ran away from home because his father had been beating him every day, and he decided he could not take it anymore. He joined the Swedish army because he wanted to fight and to kill people. He was a good soldier. Later he joined the French Foreign Legion. He fought for the French and Belgians in Africa as a sniper.

A sniper is a soldier who goes out by himself and finds a place to hide for many days, waiting for an enemy to come by him. When the enemy comes, the

sniper shoots and kills the enemy. Many times this is done from a distance far away from the enemy so that no one knows where the shot came from. The student had killed many people.

When those wars were over, he joined the American army and fought in Vietnam. Again, he killed many people. He was a good soldier who loved to kill because he had the powerful emotion of hate in him. He hated everything and everybody. He even took training to be able to kill with his hands, and he could kill a person with one hand. He was an extremely strong person.

After he received the Holy Ghost, he testified of how much he had hated everyone and everything about the Bible school. He had hated every teacher, administrator, his roommate, and even the cook. Everyone! However, when he received the Holy Ghost, his life changed instantly.

Now, instead of hatred, there was love. He would go to the worst areas of town and find people that had become alcoholics. They were letting drink control their lives to the point they cared nothing about anybody except how to get more to drink. Their lives were so out of control that they lived on the streets and slept in the doorways of shops at night. He would bring them to the school, hide them in the workshop, bring them food, pray with them, and try to help them. He would stand up in chapel and cry that no one cared for these people. He strongly felt that a program should help them. The Holy Ghost changed Bjorn from a man filled with hate to a man who could love even the most unlovable people.

Summary

When Nehemiah first heard the report from Jerusalem, he did not know that he would be the one to solve their problems. He was just concerned enough to pray. His prayer showed God the true feelings of his heart. Then the Lord began to open the doors. The king allowed Nehemiah to go and help the people of Jerusalem. When people really care for others, God will open the doors for them and their ministry.

<p>When people really care for others, God will open the doors for them and their ministry.</p>

Leading people to Jesus Christ requires the same compassion that Jesus showed to the world. What made the disciples leave their nets and jobs to follow Him? They could see something in His eyes and hear something in His voice that said, "I care for you." Even before they saw His first miracle, they followed Him.

People are looking for someone who cares for them, and they will follow that person. They are even willing to forgive mistakes if they know that their leader really wants what is best for them. They will accept your advice and help if they know your true motive is compassion. Likewise, if they know that you really do not care for them, they will not listen to you or follow your leadership.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. What is the proper motivation for doing the work of God? _____

2. Why is this true? _____

3. List several things that show us the compassion of Nehemiah. _____

4. How does the life of Nehemiah illustrate self-motivation? _____

5. How long had the Good Samaritan known the robbery victim that he found along the road? _____

6. What did the Good Samaritan focus on when he saw the man who had fallen among thieves? _____

7. How did compassion affect the Good Samaritan? _____

8. What was Nehemiah's first response to the need of his people in Jerusalem?

9. For what did Nehemiah pray? _____

10. Why did Nehemiah pray for this? _____

11. What will a true leader who really cares about others do? _____

12. What risk did Nehemiah take as a result of his compassion for his people?

13. How strongly did the apostle Paul feel about his brethren the Jews who did not know Jesus? _____

14. What change does Jesus make when He comes into a person's life?

15. When a person really cares for others, what is God's response? _____

16. How will people respond when they know that you really care about people? _____

17. List five spiritual values in the life of Nehemiah revealed in this lesson.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 3

The Godly Leader: A Person of Prayer

By James G. Poitras

Key Verse

“So I prayed to the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 2:4).

Leadership Qualities

Prayer, spiritual growth

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

The stage was set for God to do a great work. There was a need: the walls needed to be rebuilt. There was a godly leader: Nehemiah, who was a man of prayer. For four months, Nehemiah poured out his heart before God with prayer and fasting. C. H. Spurgeon said, “Whenever God determines to do a great work, He first sets His people to pray.” It is prayer that causes a leader to have a spiritual impact in his ministry. John Wesley said, “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God . . . such alone will shake the gates of Hell and set up the kingdom of Heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer.”

Nehemiah is one of the best examples of a praying leader in the Word of God. He accomplished impossible tasks because of his total dependence on God. The Book of Nehemiah starts and finishes with a prayer. Nehemiah’s first reaction to Jerusalem’s circumstances was to pray. Nehemiah entered into intercession

eleven times throughout the book. Nehemiah’s prayers were an integral part of his daily life and walk with God. His work grew out of his prayer life.

Through prayer . . .

- Nehemiah received his vision.
- He received the favor and approval of the king.
- He received the necessary supplies and the courage to deal with his enemies.
- He received wisdom in dealing with the incorrect business practices of his people.
- He received peace, faith, confidence, and security in the midst of attacks of slander, ridicule, and lies.

Nehemiah fought the spiritual battles before he ever encountered the physical battles. Nehemiah understood, in advance, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood.” Our real fight is in the prayer closet. Christ’s soldiers, the leaders, fight best on their knees.

“Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger men.
Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for
powers equal to your tasks.” (Phillips Brooks)

Chapter 1 reveals the spiritual depth of Nehemiah as a man of prayer. His vision was birthed in prayer, and he waited on God for the go-ahead before starting. His vision continued to be nurtured in prayer until it was completed. Through prayer, his burden became greater and his vision became clearer. Many times leaders do not consult God before making decisions. Many times when things go badly they testify, “I really didn’t pray about that.”

A Look at Nehemiah’s Prayers

Reference	Type of Prayer
1:4-11	Prayer of intercession for the people
2:4	Prayer for guidance
4:4-5	Prayer for God to avenge wrong
4:9	Prayer in spite of the enemies’ threats
5:19	Prayer for God to remember
6:9	Prayer for strength against enemies

6:14	Prayer for faith and God's intervention
9:5-38	Group prayer and repentance
13:22	Prayer for mercy
13:29	Prayer for the ministry
13:31	Closing prayer

The Wise Man said, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Our own understanding is very limited and subject to error. We make decisions without seeing the big picture as God sees it.

<p>FORMULA FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT Prayer + Sacrifice + Hard Work + <u>Perseverance</u> Accomplishment of Our God-given Vision</p>

The prayers of Nehemiah also teach that if a leader desires anything from people, he should present it first to God. Nehemiah prayed, "And prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man" (Nehemiah 1:11).

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). The prayers of God's people influence Him to persuade rulers and people to make decisions according to the plan of God. (See I Timothy 2:1-3.)

Nehemiah prayed and kept his priorities in the right direction. Because of this, the wall was finished. This all started with a prayer. Look at some of the "so" statements in Nehemiah:

SO...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "So I prayed to the God of heaven" (2:4). • "So I came to Jerusalem" (2:11). • "So they strengthened their hands for this good work" (2:18).

• “So built we the wall” (4:6).
• “So that I cannot come down” (6:3).
• “So the wall was finished” (6:15).

Leadership Priorities

Leaders in the early church in the Book of Acts established their priorities right in the very beginning of church history. Should these priorities be any different today?

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” (I Timothy 2:1).

Leadership Praying

Prayer warrior Vesta Mangun says that leaders can:

1. Measure their love for their people by their prayer life.
2. Measure their concern for their people by their prayer life.
3. Measure their vision for their people by their prayer life.
4. Measure their leadership of their people by their prayer life.

A necessary part of the leaders’ spiritual leadership is praying for the people they lead. It is a sin for leaders to fail to pray for those to whom they are spiritually responsible. Leaders must be examples to their people. They cannot lead them to where they have not been themselves.

Jesus Prayed

Jesus said, “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). The Gospels record seventeen times when Jesus prayed. It is not a mistake that many times Jesus allowed His followers to see Him praying. He also prayed for them many times. This stirred a hunger in them

that caused them to ask, "Teach us to pray!" One man said, "What a minister is in his prayer closet is what he is, no more, no less."

Bible Leaders Who Prayed

Samuel:

"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way" (I Samuel 12:23).

Moses:

"Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32).

Jesus:

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Paul:

"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (Romans 1:9).

"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" (Philippians 1:4).

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might" (Colossians 1:9-11).

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers” (I Thessalonians 1:2)

“Wherefore also we pray always for you” (II Thessalonians 1:11).

“Without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day” (II Timothy 1:3).

Summary

Leaders must pray! They must pray for guidance, vision, and strength to do the work. As needed, leaders must repent of prayerlessness and trying to do things without seeking God’s face. They must pray for God’s intervention, for mercy, and for anointing and power in their ministry. Leaders must pray for the people and the churches they lead.

Pray for great things; expect great things; work for great things; but above all . . . <i>PRAY</i> . (R. A. Torrey)
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WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. How long did Nehemiah pray for Jerusalem before he did anything else?

2. How many times did Nehemiah pray a prayer of intercession throughout the Book of Nehemiah? _____

3. Write a list of five things that Nehemiah received through his prayers.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

4. Philips Brooks told us to pray for what? _____

5. Write the Formula for Accomplishment. _____

6. What do Nehemiah's prayers teach us about things we expect to receive from other people? _____

7. In Acts 6, what did the apostles say they would make as their greatest priority? _____

8. In I Timothy 2, what did Paul say should be made for all men? _____

9. According to Vesta Mangun, what four things can be measured by our prayer lives?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

10. Why is prayer for the people a necessity in the life of a leader? _____

11. List some of the Bible leaders who prayed for their people. _____

12. Samuel said that for him to not pray for King Saul would be a what?

13. R. A. Torrey said which of these activities were above all the others: expectation, work, prayer. _____

14. How many times do the Gospels record that Jesus prayed? _____

15. What have you, the student, learned from this lesson? _____

Lesson 4

Nehemiah: A Man with a Call

By David L. Flowers

Key Verses

“And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem . . . Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build” (Nehemiah 2:12, 18).

Leadership Qualities

Sense of direction, willing spirit, humility, the call of God, patience, faithfulness

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Nehemiah’s Call

Nehemiah was a man with compassion. He was also a man of prayer. He felt the heavy need of the people of Jerusalem, and he began to pray diligently for them. By seeing the need and responding to it, Nehemiah was committing himself to help minister to the needs of the people.

He prayed and sought God four months. Perhaps he really did not know what to do. He just knew there was a great need. As he prayed, he waited to see

what God would do. As he waited, a conviction began to grow in his heart: He had to go to Jerusalem and build the wall! God had put it in his heart to do this.

However, he now had to tell the king. This could be very dangerous. If the king thought he was shirking his duty or being ungrateful, it could mean his death. His prayer became, "O LORD, I beseech you, let now your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants, who desire to fear your name. I pray you to prosper me this day, and grant me mercy in the sight of this man. For I am the king's cupbearer." (See Nehemiah 1:4-11).

The moment of truth came one day when the king inquired about a change he had noticed in Nehemiah. Formerly, Nehemiah had not been sad. Sorrow now marred Nehemiah's countenance. Nehemiah quickly, silently prayed to God. Then he began to tell the king the burden of his heart.

Nehemiah's call was confirmed when the king, after hearing of the burden of Nehemiah's heart, agreed that Nehemiah should be the one to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of that city. Nehemiah had risked everything to tell the king of his desire. God had confirmed what He had put in Nehemiah's heart. Nehemiah was soon to be on his way to Jerusalem to fulfill the call of God.

The Universal Call of God

Jesus Christ our Lord sees and knows the needs of every individual on the earth. He desires to minister to the needs of humanity through His body, the church. It is in this sense that every Christian, every member of the body of Christ, is called to fulfill the desire of the Head of the body, Jesus Christ. He has no hands but our hands. He has no feet but our feet. If He is going to minister to the needs of people today, He will do it through us.

This is the call of God in a universal sense. Scripture declares, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22). Speaking of God's desire for humanity, Paul declared, "Who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4). This demands that all Christians should very carefully consider God's desire to save everyone. It should be the guiding principle behind all that spiritual leaders do. It is necessary that every Christian respond positively to this universal call of God.

Isaiah's Call

In Isaiah 6, the prophet had a vision of the Lord sitting upon His throne. He saw the seraphim as they cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3). Isaiah saw the glory of God and all that was happening as a result of God's presence.

His first response was to cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). He felt his unworthiness and his sinfulness. He did not feel that he deserved to participate in something so high and holy as what he saw before him.

The truth is no one is worthy of a relationship with God. It is God's desire to fellowship with men and women that makes it possible for a person to have this relationship. God desires that all people be saved, and He provides the means for that to be accomplished. Just as the coal from the altar of sacrifice cleansed the prophet's lips, the blood of Jesus, who was sacrificed for the sins of the whole world, purges sin today.

But is that all there is to it? Do people simply receive salvation and that is all? Was that what the prophet Isaiah experienced? As the vision continued, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8). He heard the universal call of God. Being purged from sin was not enough. God wanted someone to hear His call and respond.

The Great Commission

The New Testament records the Great Commission in five places: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8. This command to go teach and preach the gospel to all nations is not just for the apostles and believers of that time. Neither is it the responsibility of only the preachers. It is also the responsibility of all the saints in the whole church at all times.

Jesus said, "The harvest is truly plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into the harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38). The church should not only pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers, but every saint needs to respond as Isaiah did, "Here am I, Lord. Send me!" All believers need to find their place in God's work. Just as each member of the natural body supplies what it can to the overall benefit

of the body, the members of the body of Christ must supply what they can to His body for the overall benefit of the ministry. Each saint has a work to do.

When individuals have done this, they have responded positively to the universal call of God. It is at this point God can deal with them specifically about what they can do in His work.

The Specific Call of God

After Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8), God began to show him what He wanted Isaiah to do. Once a person becomes committed to the universal will of God, God is free to assign him or her to do the tasks He chooses.

The Disciples

The disciples first heard Jesus say, "Follow Me." They left everything to do so. He then began training them for the specific work they were to do. God has not promised to answer all the questions immediately. The Lord has asked that individuals follow Him and make a commitment to serve Him. Then He will begin to shape their lives so that they can do the work of the ministry that will please Him.

Fulfilling the Specific Call of God

Each person must learn to develop into his or her own calling and follow it. Paul said in Philippians 2:12-13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." He was speaking to people in a church who had already obeyed the gospel in repentance, water baptism in Jesus' name, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. He was not telling them to do some act by which they would initiate their own salvation. Paul was instructing them to let the salvation they had already received, "Work out."

Spiritual leadership develops the same way. A leader may have many natural abilities and talents. When God saves an individual, He will add the spiritual dimension that will enable him or her to develop a ministry. God will give the desire and the power to do this.

Realizing the Call

Everyone does not arrive at the specific call of God in the same way. Some people seem to find it very easily while others seem to struggle to find what they are supposed to do for God.

In the Bible are men who realized their call during their youth and began developing it early in their lives. Perhaps they had parents who encouraged them in the call of God.

- Samuel's mother "lent" him to the Lord all the days of his life. (See I Samuel 1:24-28.)
- God chose Jeremiah before he was born to be a prophet. Jeremiah then had to choose to do the will of God when the Word of the Lord came to him. (See Jeremiah 1:4-10.)
- Paul reminded Timothy of the faith that had been in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Paul then admonished him to stir up the gift that was within him. (See II Timothy 1:5-6.)

People like these must live consistent with that call all the days of their lives. They must realize the importance of their calling and the ministry that God has given them.

Many people know and develop their calling by being faithful in the work they are now doing. Faithfulness is their strength. Because they have been faithful, God is able to add a ministry that they do not now have.

- Nehemiah was busy doing his work for the king of Persia when God called him.
- Even though Moses knew that God wanted to deliver Israel from Egypt, he was faithful in his work for his father-in-law for forty years until the time was right to lead Israel out of Egypt.
- Even though David was already anointed to be king, he respected the man who had been anointed before him and waited until God removed Saul from his throne. David then became the king of Israel.
- The disciples of Jesus were required to follow Jesus, receive teaching, and wait for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost before they could begin ministering on their own.

Some people have a ministry now. They are already engaged in a work for the Lord. However, because of their faithfulness, their call will develop into an even greater ministry than they now have.

- The deacons were chosen in Acts 6 to serve tables and be over certain functions of the church. Later, they were found involved in greater ministries of preaching.
- Stephen, also a former deacon, was full of faith and power. He began to do great miracles and wonders among the people. (See Acts 6:8)
- Philip, formerly a deacon also, was the first to preach to the Samaritans. He did many signs and wonders among the Samaritans.
- Barnabas, at first a believer in the church at Jerusalem, eventually became a missionary traveling with Saul of Tarsus.
- Saul of Tarsus, at first feared and rejected by the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem, became a missionary and apostle to the Gentiles. He also became a writer of a significant portion of the New Testament.

Requirements

How do people grow spiritually until they realize their call and are able to begin fulfilling it? Many attributes could be discussed concerning this. A few will be considered here:

1. Personal Salvation

Of course, personal salvation is always a necessity. Our personal faith should lead us to repentance, water baptism in Jesus' name, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is the foundation of any relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. Personal Holiness and Faithfulness

A person must immediately begin seeking how to obey God in all areas of his life. His personal holiness and faithfulness to God must become a priority in his life. Overcoming temptation and developing his prayer life are two areas of vital importance. A person should focus on simply following the teachings of Jesus in every area of his life.

3. Humility

Humility is the basic attribute God looks for in everyone. Humility is agreeing with God. It is a state in which a person does not think of herself too highly or too lowly. Because she is humble, she can think accurately about herself, about God, and about the circumstances in which she finds herself. Humility is a submissive attitude in which she desires God's will above all else. Pride, on the other hand, will bring separation from God and His will. Pride is putting our ways, thoughts, and values above God and His ways.

4. Willingness

Flowing out of a humble mind is a willing spirit. Spiritual leaders must be willing to do God's will regardless of the cost. A willing spirit is one that accepts God's will above all else.

5. Endurance

Endurance is essential to accomplishing the work of God. Another term for endurance is patience. Spiritual leaders must keep on believing and striving in the work of God even though circumstances may look impossible. Endurance is possible because spiritual leaders know for whom they labor. They know that all things are God's and that He will be the One who will ultimately reward their labor. Spiritual leaders know that someday they will stand before Him and give account of their work. (See II Corinthians 5:6-21 and Revelation 14:12.)

Confirmation of the Call

One of the amazing parts of the call of God is that not only does the person who receives the call know it, but others will recognize the call of God in a person's life as well. God will use mature saints to confirm the call. Even some people not in the church will recognize that there is something different about him. In other words, he will not be the only one to know about God's call for his life. God will confirm the call He has placed upon an individual by revealing it to others who will confirm it to him.

Summary

God will use the members of His body to do His work in the world. This means He has something for each one to do now. If this is true, then people should begin immediately “working out” the will of God in their lives. That is the call right now. As people are busy doing God’s will, He will direct their lives and lead them into the service He has chosen for them. He will add to their gift, confirm their call, and develop their leadership ability. The greater the call of God, the greater the responsibility will become. At times the only thing a leader will have to hold on to is the call from God.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. What was the very dangerous situation that Nehemiah faced four months after he had heard the news from Jerusalem? Why was it a dangerous situation?

2. How was Nehemiah’s call confirmed as a result of the above situation?

3. Describe the “universal call of God.” _____

4. What is the desire of God for all humankind concerning salvation? _____

5. Where is the Great Commission found in the Bible? _____

6. What is the correct response to the Great Commission? _____

7. When does God begin to deal with an individual concerning the specific work God wants him or her to do? _____

8. Write the words of Philippians 2:12-13. _____

9. Explain the meaning of Philippians 2:12-13. _____

10. What is the responsibility of those who know the call of God from their youth? _____

11. Regarding ministry, what is the reward of those who are faithful?

12. List five requirements or attributes that are necessary for spiritual growth and maturity.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

13. Why is salvation important to the ministry? _____

14. What should be the basic focus for personal holiness and faithfulness?

15. What is humility? _____

16. What is pride? _____

17. What attribute flows out of humility? _____

18. What is another word for *endurance*? _____

19. What is endurance or patience? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 5

Nehemiah: The Leader Who Looked Ahead

By James G. Poitras

Key Verse

“And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3).

Leadership Qualities

Visionary, communicator, influencer

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Leader, What Is in Your Heart?

A village chief lay dying and wanted to choose a successor. He called his three sons and told them, “Sons, I am about to go to the place of the departed spirits, and I must first choose one of you to be the next chief of this village. I want you to go to the yonder mountain, climb it, and bring me something from the mountain. Hurry because I will soon die. Life is quickly passing from me.”

The three sons hurried off to the mountain and individually began to climb it. After a couple of days, the first son came and stood before the aged

chief. He said, "Father, I have climbed very high on the mountain and I have brought you a tree limb." The chief asked him to go and wait for the return of the other two sons.

Several days passed until the second son returned to the father. "Father, I have climbed so high on the mountain and I have gone above where the trees are. I have brought you a rock from the mountain," he stated, visibly tired from the journey.

It seemed like a long time and the third son had not returned. Finally, he appeared before his father. "Father," he began, "I have climbed so high on the mountain. I have gone above where the trees are, and I have climbed to the very top of the mountain. From the top I could see so far into the distance. I could see the river flowing, and I could see smoke rising from distant huts. I saw the beauty of God's creation. However, my dying father, I have nothing in my hand to bring you." The old chief whispered, "You, my third son will lead my people because even though you have nothing in your hand to bring me, you do have something in your heart" (James Poitras, *Acts: God's Training Manual for Today's Church*).

Time Out for Group Interaction

- Instructors: Discuss some of the people in the Bible that God gave a vision to (put something in their heart to do for Him) and discuss what their visions were (things God put in their heart to do). You may want to encourage participants to take a few minutes and check their Bibles for these.
- Ask participants to define *vision*. What has God put in your heart to do for Him?

What Is Vision?

Webster's Dictionary says *vision* is the "act of seeing or the ability to see." In a spiritual sense it refers to the ability to see as God sees, especially as a person looks at the future. Jesus asked His disciples, "Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not?" (Mark 8:18). First Samuel 3:1 states, "The Word of the LORD was precious in those days: there was no open vision."

What a tragic day when leaders are not able to receive a vision from the Lord of what could be, should be, and must be!

In I Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul wrote concerning his ministry, the testimony of God, and his desire in knowing Jesus Christ. Following that he quoted Isaiah 64:4, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (I Corinthians 2:9-10).

Vision is the key to achievement. All effective leaders have a vision for what they want to accomplish. Vision is from God. It is the best predictor of the future. It can be defined as a clear picture of God’s future plan for God-given ministry. A vision is what God places in your heart to do for Him. It provides a sense of destiny, a purpose in life, and a reason for living. Vision is birthed and shaped in prayer. Vision is not given to satisfy selfish desires but to satisfy the desire of the Creator in an individual’s life and in the world.

A successful pastor is a pastor with a vision (and one who is implementing it). Pastors and leaders with vision are real treasures to the church. The future belongs to visionary pastors because they are able to see and define the future. People cannot be real leaders unless they are able to chart the course that their followers are supposed to follow. God wants to show the leaders the road to their future and their destination. He wants the leaders to travel down this road, encourage others to come along, and reach their God-given destination.

Vision is something a leader receives alone. Nehemiah received his vision this way. However, after it is received, it must be shared.

What Does the Bible Say about Vision?

When it comes to vision, the classical, often-quoted Bible verse is, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). It tells the leader that unless the people of God have a clear direction of where they are going, they likely are not going to get very far.

“He who does not look ahead, remains behind.” (Spanish Proverb)

Bible Examples of Vision—the Good and Bad

Men of God in the Bible were men of vision.

- Joseph, a young man of seventeen, received his vision for life through two dreams. When he shared his vision, he immediately encountered “vision killers.” (See Genesis 37:8, 10.)
- Moses received his vision at the burning bush.
- Apostle Paul was given his vision in Acts 9:15. In Acts 26:19 he was able to tell King Agrippa, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”
- Jesus stated His vision as, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

God wants to give each of us a vision. That is why He has called us to be leaders. We are called to fulfill the vision that God has given to us. It involves getting others to take part (called vision networking). This requires us to communicate the vision (called casting the vision). As we do these things there will be tests that will come our way from people and circumstances (called vision killers).

No leader wants to be like Eli whose “eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see” (I Samuel 3:2). How sad when a leader cannot see (because he is vision-less.)

Receiving a Vision

Spiritual leaders cannot know God’s vision for their lives unless they first know God. Leaders must be saved, submissive to God’s will (Romans 12:1-2), and prayerful in order to receive a vision from God for ministry. God is able to speak to a leader and the leader is able to know Him through a daily prayer life and reading the Word of God. Spiritual vision is born in prayer and will continue to grow in the same atmosphere.

Sharing the Vision—Vision Casting

“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Habakkuk 2:2).

The vision should be written down so that it can be expressed. It should be made plain so that the leader will understand it and so that others will be able to understand also. When others understand the vision, they will want to network with her in:

1. Working with her to accomplish the vision.
2. Supporting her vision through their prayers and finance.

They will “run with the vision.” Unity becomes necessary for the vision to be accomplished. The leader must become the vision interpreter. The leader must interpret the vision and explain it in such a way that the people will understand it and it will make sense to them.

Defining the Vision for Ministry

When written down, the vision is called a “vision statement.” When writing a vision statement use the KISS method (Keep It Short and Simple). Keep the vision statement brief. (Leaders may write a more detailed vision statement for their personal use.) Make sure that this brief statement is easy for everyone to understand.

Time Out for Group Interaction:

What are some of the many ways that a leader can cast or communicate the vision he has to people? (Example: during his preaching, printed on a bookmark, etc.)

Vision Networking

Nehemiah was able to get others to network with him to accomplish his vision. Not only did the king agree to give him a leave of absence, he wrote letters to the governors and to the keeper of the king’s forest (for timber). Nehemiah then networked with all of the people necessary to complete the job.

“Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work” (Nehemiah 2:18).

“So built we the wall: and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6).

Vision Killers

The enemy used different tactics to stop the work on the vision: ridicule, threats of war, slander against their leader, pleading for compromise, threats, and so forth. None of these things worked. Nehemiah stood firm and handled each vision killer as it came along. He refused to stop working on the vision. Even when problems erupted within his own ranks, resulting in discouragement, fear, selfishness, and maltreatment of each other, he still would not stop.

Nehemiah never lost sight of the vision and his testimony remained, “I’m doing a great work, so that I cannot come down!” Nehemiah had a vision of the greatness of the work to which he had been called. He would not be distracted by anything or anyone.

Implementing the Vision

In his book on Nehemiah titled *Be Determined*, Warren Wiersbe said, “Leadership involves vision, revision, and supervision; but the greatest of these is vision.” Nehemiah never lost that vision. He received the vision; revised it through renewing the vision; and provided the supervision necessary to complete the task in record time.

Wiersbe said, “Leaders must see what others don’t see and then challenge others to follow until they see.”

Renewing the Vision—Nehemiah Principle

The Nehemiah Principle teaches that the vision must be restated every twenty-six days. The leader must keep the vision constantly before his people. This principle receives its name from Nehemiah renewing the vision after twenty-six days of work (when the construction of the wall was half completed.)

Time Out for Group Interaction

Can you briefly write out your God-given vision for ministry?

- Instructors should take a few moments and have the participants write this out and then call on several to share what they have written.

My vision is . . .

Summary

Leadership expert John Maxwell states in *Developing the Leader Within You* that “all great leaders possess two things: one, they know where they are going and two, they are able to persuade others to follow.” Someone said that those that “aim at nothing usually hit it. If you don’t know where you’re going any road will take you there.” When a leader knows where he is going, he can then influence others to follow and go with him. It has been said, “Leadership is influence.” When a leader persuades others to follow him, and they actually agree, it can then be said that he has influenced them—he has become their leader.

“A blind man’s world is limited by his touch;
An ignorant man’s world by the limits of his knowledge;
A great man’s world by the limits of his vision.”
(Paul E. Harvey)

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. How does *Webster’s Dictionary* define *vision*? _____

2. What does *vision* mean in a spiritual sense? _____

3. Why is vision the “key to achievement”? _____

4. Vision is birthed and shaped in prayer and accomplishes what purpose?

5. How does this lesson define a “successful pastor”? _____

6. Why does the future belong to the “visionary pastor”? _____

7. Write Proverbs 29:18. _____

8. What is the meaning of Proverbs 29:18? _____

9. What is a “vision killer”? _____

10. Why has God called us to be leaders? _____

11. What is required before a person can know God’s vision for their life?

12. Why should our vision be written down? _____

13. What is meant by “vision casting”? _____

14. When people understand our vision, how will they respond? _____

15. What is meant by the term “vision interpreter”? _____

16. What is a "vision statement"? _____

17. What is meant by the term "KISS method"? _____

18. Define "vision networking." _____

19. Warren Wiersbe says that leadership involves what three elements?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

20. State the "Nehemiah Principle." _____

21. John Maxwell says that all leaders possess what two great attributes?
A. _____
B. _____

22. Leadership is _____.

Lesson 6

Goal Setting: The Key to Accomplishment

By Jerry R. Richardson and David L. Flowers

Key Verses

“Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work” (Nehemiah 2:17-18).

Leadership Qualities

Having clear vision, communicating well, following through, setting realistic goals

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Getting Started

Nehemiah had come a long way from being the king’s cupbearer. He had prayed, fasted, and sought God concerning the needs of Israel. This had caused him to become a man of compassion. God had “called” Nehemiah to rebuild the

walls of Jerusalem. As an Israelite, he wanted to see both the removal of the reproach his people had suffered and a revival of Israel's spiritual life. Nehemiah committed his life to this goal.

No Boasting

When he arrived in Jerusalem, he did not begin boasting of his intentions. So often people boast about what they intend to do, or they speak of what "ought to be done." But they never get around to doing anything about it. These people have a problem setting goals and then not fulfilling them. Someone has said that the road to failure is paved with good intentions. One must act on good intentions or failure will be the result. Good intentions coupled with effective goal setting are necessary to accomplish objectives.

Learn about the Task

Leaders must learn all they can about the task that must be done. Hearing about a problem may start a person upon a course of action. However, things that are heard may not always be accurate. Leaders are responsible to know as much as possible about the details of the task. This means they must be good listeners and they must care enough to get good, accurate information.

Soon after arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah arose late one night. Taking a few men with him, he went outside the city during the night to view the ruins of the walls of Jerusalem. Doing this gave him a good view of the work God had called him to do.

In addition to the call of God, a good leader must get information that will enable him to do the work. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

The Ultimate Goal

As Nehemiah looked at the destroyed walls and gates, he must have realized how large this task really was. Even with the resources of the king available to him, how could a job this big be done quickly?

Nehemiah decided to break this large task down into many smaller ones. By doing things this way, Nehemiah and his people could succeed. Nehemiah 3 gives a detailed account of exactly how this large undertaking was broken down into forty-two smaller tasks. Nehemiah then assigned responsibilities to the various groups of workers.

Many people are able to see the needs of the church such as:

- The church needs to grow.
- The nation needs to be evangelized.
- The nations around the world need to be reached with the gospel.

These are examples of what might be called “the ultimate goal.” How can these goals be accomplished?

The leader must learn about the details of the task:

- The size of the work to be done.
- The people who are willing to help him.
- Special talents or skills that will be needed.
- The resources that are available.
- The kind of organization that will be required.
- How can the whole work be broken down into smaller parts that can be easily finished?

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn all you can by careful study.• Develop a plan of action.• Share your burden and plan with your people. |
|--|

A Plan of Action

Nehemiah had already obtained permission from the king of Persia to acquire building materials from the king’s forests and quarries. Now he actually had to see how much building material would be required. He also began dividing the work into smaller segments, and he set goals for each group of workers that would be appointed. All of this was being done before Nehemiah ever told anyone what he had come to Jerusalem to do.

Share the Plan with the People

The time had now come to tell the people of the things God had put into his heart. Nehemiah 2:17-18 records his words.

He stated the situation: “Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.”

He cast his vision and stated the ultimate goal: “Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.”

Finally, he began to instill his faith in them. He told them of the victories (however small) that he had already won: “Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me.”

The People Get Involved

The people then caught the vision: “And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.” How did they strengthen their hands?

1. They followed their leader’s burden and faith.
2. No doubt they prepared themselves physically and mentally.
3. As they listened to his plan of action, they began to see the part each one would perform individually.

This is followed by an important key step: Nehemiah divided the work into smaller assignments. Each individual had responsibility to a group. Each group received an assignment. Nehemiah 3 records the specific assignments he gave each group.

No one could have done the whole job alone. Even one group would not have been able to accomplish the ultimate goal. However, with each person doing their part, the work began to be accomplished very quickly. Together they completed the entire project in fifty-two days. (See Nehemiah 6:15.)

Setting Goals

(The following is based upon a message at a sub-regional seminar given by Regional Director Jerry R. Richardson.)

The problem is not that people do not know they need to set goals. Many times they simply do not know how to set them properly. It has been said, "He who aims at nothing will usually hit just what he aimed at." God's work is too important to simply aim at nothing. Neither can a person do everything at once. Leaders need a plan by which they can utilize time, energy, and resources.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:13-15).

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT SETTING GOALS

1. Set realistic goals.
2. Define the goal.
3. Communicate the goal.
4. Divide the goal.
5. Evaluate the progress of the goal.
6. Recognize those who help reach the goal.

Set Realistic Goals

Goals must be realistic. Realistic goals will inspire people to work.

Suppose the ultimate goal is to make a church grow. If the church has one hundred members, and a goal of adding ten thousand in one year is set, the members will not be motivated at all. They know that this is impossible to do. A leader should think about a more realistic goal.

Perhaps the church did not try very hard last year and yet baptized twenty-five. This suggests the need to greatly increase the goal for total baptisms to reflect a realistic number if the people work hard. If, however, the people were

really working hard and only twenty-five were baptized, then maybe a ten percent increase would be a realistic goal for the coming year.

Define the Goal

Sometimes a goal dies simply because the leader fails to define it.

- What is the goal?
- Who is to be involved?
- How is it to be achieved?
- What is the time frame?
- Is this goal part of a larger goal, or is it a goal that stands on its own?
- Clarify the goal until those involved understand it as completely as possible.

Communicate the Goal

Once the goal has been determined, “casting the vision” is the next important step. Casting the vision is the process of making those who are following feel that the given goal is theirs also. It involves explanation and discussion until the people understand it and get excited about it. Explain how the goal has been divided into various parts and how the parts will fit together to reach the ultimate goal.

The people will need constant encouragement until they reach the goal. Do not set a goal and then forget about it. The people will complete the goal only if the leader encourages them and continues talking about the goal.

Divide the Goal

A realistic goal that involves a church, or a nation, or a region is not obtainable with only one action. It will require a process of actions to accomplish what has been planned. To reach the goal, divide it into smaller parts

Suppose a national church has a goal to see four thousand people baptized in water and filled with the Holy Ghost this year. How should this goal be divided into smaller parts?

First, because it is a goal for a year, divide it into twelve parts. This means the goal would be to have 334 people baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost each month nationally.

Next, suppose the nation has six districts. These districts are about the same size and strength with a presbyter functioning over each district. Since the goal is 334 per month, each district will be working to have fifty-six people per month baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Further, perhaps the districts average nineteen churches. Fifty-six divided by nineteen is about three. So, each church will have a goal to seeing three people per month baptized in Jesus' name and receiving the Holy Ghost.

Does this seem possible? Suddenly, the goal of seeing four thousand people baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost seems to be reasonable and obtainable. The people can relate to this kind of goal. They will be inspired and excited about seeing this goal attained.

Evaluate the Goal

Some people will wait until the last month before beginning to work to reach the goal. To avoid this, require follow-up reports to match the basic period of the plan. Since the figures were broken down according to months, the report should be monthly. Each pastor should report to the presbyter the number of people baptized and those who received the Holy Ghost during that month.

Some pastors will forget to report, so the presbyter will have to contact them and ask for the report. By doing this, he will keep the goal before them and encourage them to get involved.

The presbyter should then report to the national superintendent or national secretary. This will allow the leaders to keep a close eye on the progress of the goal—churches. They can also identify areas needing help to reach their goal.

Recognize Participants

Appropriate words of appreciation are always in order for those who assist in reaching the goal. This communicates gratefulness. It also makes those

who participated feel like a team member. It expresses the idea that the vision is theirs as well as the leader's.

Conclusion

Setting good goals is a very important key to accomplishing the ultimate task. More will be accomplished for God if goals are set and completed.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. List the things that enabled Nehemiah to realize his call. _____

2. Discuss Nehemiah's attitude and actions when he arrived at Jerusalem.

3. Discuss II Timothy 2:15 in light of Nehemiah's work. _____

4. Discuss II Timothy 2:15 in light of your own call. _____

5. List some goals that you have set that might be described as an “ultimate goal.” _____

6. List some of the details that leaders must pay attention to in order to accomplish their goals. _____

7. After leaders have learned all they can about the goals that need to be reached, what should they do? _____

8. Discuss the things that Nehemiah included as he began to share his plan of action with the people. _____

9. Once the people caught the vision cast by Nehemiah, how did they strengthen their hands? _____

10. What was an important key step that Nehemiah did? _____

11. Why do leaders need to set goals? _____

12. List six important points about setting goals.
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____
F. _____

13. What is a “realistic goal”? _____

14. How do leaders “define” the goal? _____

15. What is meant by the term “casting a vision”? _____

16. How does a leader “divide the goal”? _____

17. What is the responsibility of the leader during the time his people are engaged in doing the work? _____

18. What is involved in the process of “evaluating” the goal? _____

19. In what way does a leader recognize those who participated in accomplishing the goal? _____

20. Why should leaders involve themselves in goal setting? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 7

Nehemiah: The Leader Who Overcame Opposition

By David L. Flowers

Key Verses

“When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel” (Nehemiah 2:10).

“But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:19-20).

Leadership Qualities:

Persistence, faith, courage, perseverance, ability to solve problems, discernment, focus

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

The commitment to be a leader in the work of God is very exciting and satisfying. Leaders respond to the need of God's people and God's work. They pray, fast, and obey the call of God. They have a vision for their field of labor. Compassion has moved them to do something about the needs they have seen. They are willing and ready to act in a way to do something constructive for the kingdom of God.

God's Enemies

Some leaders are surprised that not everyone is enthusiastic about the work they desire to do for God. They should not be surprised. God has enemies.

Satan is an enemy of the work of God. He desires to stop all progress in the kingdom of God. He will create difficult circumstances and problems. These will be designed to discourage. He can even place negative thoughts and fears in a leader's mind by which he hopes to hinder progress.

Also, Satan will use other people. Some people do not appreciate what a leader is trying to do for God. They do not see the work of God the way the leader sees it. They do not have the vision. Their values are not the same. Therefore, they—knowingly or even unknowingly—become an enemy to the work of God. They will try to discourage a person working for God. These people may ridicule, threaten, or intimidate.

Satan's Toolbox of Opposition:

Circumstances, scorn, despite, deception, questions (innuendo), problems, negative thoughts, fears, laughter (at you), and so forth.

Satan is consumed with trying to stop the progress of God's work in any way that he can. He will use any tool and any person in any way that he can. Satan does not have to tell the truth. If he can make a lie believable, he will use it and be satisfied. His sole desire is to stop the work of God. Remember, he is the enemy.

Some people will not know Satan is using them. However, a leader must be able to discern the true nature of the problem(s) they present. She must know God and His Word well enough to be able to see the truth about these people.

Nehemiah the Overcomer

Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah had set about to begin the work God had called him to do. He viewed the walls and completed the plans for their construction. He “cast his vision” so that the people could see it; then it became their vision too. However, even before he could cast the vision (Nehemiah 2:17-18), Sanballat and Tobiah heard that he had come to help the children of Israel and were grieved by that news (Nehemiah 2:10). Opposition was already manifesting itself against Nehemiah, although the enemy did not yet know what he had come to do.

Once Sanballat and Tobiah heard that Nehemiah and the children of Israel were going to attempt the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, they laughed at the people. They scorned them and despised them saying, “What is this thing that ye do?” Sanballat and Tobiah pretended to believe that trying to build the wall was the most ridiculous thing they had ever heard. The truth is they were afraid of what would happen if the walls were rebuilt. They were trying to cast doubt into the minds of the people before the work could begin.

Then they became very vicious saying, “Will ye rebel against the king?” They projected the idea that Nehemiah and the people were rebelling against the king without really accusing them of it. They simply asked a question that had an implied answer.

This kind of question is called “innuendo.” This means more is being stated than is really said. They were implying that Nehemiah and the people had other motives. This was a very vicious kind of spirit. It promised great opposition to their plans. It was an indirect threat designed to put fear in them. Sanballat and Tobiah were implying that they would suggest this possibility to the king of Persia. This would have been very frightening to some people.

However, Nehemiah recognized all of these possibilities. He answered the opposition by saying, “The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:20).

Nehemiah overcame the opposition by expressing faith in God. He did not allow fear to enter his heart, neither did he run and hide from these people. He knew what they did not know. He knew about the days and weeks of prayer and fasting that he had done before talking to the king. He knew about his conversations with the king. He knew how God had already been at work in his behalf making it possible to get to Jerusalem. He knew that the king had promised to supply them from his own forests and quarries. Nehemiah had already seen God's preparation of the heart of the king.

Nehemiah had the determination to persevere in the work despite their words. He would not let them discourage him by making fun and laughing at him. He had the courage to persist. He determined to continue working despite their scornful attitude.

Nehemiah maintained a separation from those who would try to stop progress. He knew these enemies neither wanted to see the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt nor the people to prosper and be blessed. He knew that if he allowed Sanballat and Tobiah to join the people of Jerusalem, they would sabotage the work. Nehemiah had the discernment to know that these men would do all within their power to hinder God's program. Therefore, he maintained a separation from them so the walls could be built. Nehemiah overcame the enemies of Jerusalem by maintaining a focus on the work he was doing. By doing this, he protected the people and the work from enemies.

Opposition in the New Testament

Apostle Peter wrote in I Peter 3:14-17:

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

He also penned:

“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (I Peter 4:14-16).

Becoming One Who Overcomes

God’s Spiritual Weapons:

Prayer, fasting, giving, persistence, perseverance, gifts of the Spirit, fruit of the Spirit

The important thing to understand is that Satan can be overcome. A person can defeat all of the tools that Satan may choose to use.

Christian leaders are not building a wall around a city, but they are building the church. Leaders face opposition from various sources that are just as real as the opposition Nehemiah faced in his work. God’s leaders have been empowered with weapons that God has given. Paul talked about these weapons: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Corinthians 10:3-5).

A Basic Assumption

One assumption has to be made. If the leader is a child of God, one must assume he is living a holy, righteous life. Victory over sin and temptation is very important. If a leader struggles with ungodly habits, acts of sin that have not been confessed and forsaken, or mental sins that continually emerge, he must confess and forsake them now lest Satan use them to defeat him. Hebrews 12:1b-2a says, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” If leaders do not lay aside the weights and besetting sins, they will be hindering themselves and giving Satan the

opportunity he wants to accuse them and fight against them. Paul said, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Corinthians 2:11).

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Timothy 2:4).

Please understand that the battle is not against people or circumstances. Instead, it is a spiritual conflict involving Satan's realm and power. He is simply using people and/or circumstances to accomplish his program. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

"Fight the good fight of faith" (I Timothy 6:12).

Overcoming Opposition

Opposition will come. When a leader does something for God, opposition will come. The question is how to handle opposition.

In the time of Jesus, the Pharisees said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy" (Matthew 5:43). They taught that hating an enemy was the normal way of dealing with opposition. They even indicated this was the way God wanted His people to deal with their enemies. Many people behave like the Pharisees taught.

However, Jesus said, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

Jesus taught that a person should use spiritual weapons when facing opposition from whatever source. He said, "Love your enemies." Enemies are the opposition to whatever extent. How should a person react to them? According to Jesus, a child of God should love them. Do not seek vengeance against them. A person should treat them like he himself would want to be

treated. Do not love them because of what they are doing or saying. Love them in spite of those things. This is how God loves them.

Further, Jesus said, “Bless them that curse you.” The word *curse* here is “to pronounce doom or judgment” upon someone. Some will say that a person is going to fail. They will insist that he cannot succeed. This is much the same as Sanballat and Tobiah were saying about Nehemiah. Jesus said to “bless” these people. Do not retaliate by saying bad things about them and becoming just like them. *To bless* means “to pronounce a blessing.” Find something good to say about them. If that is not possible, say nothing, or speak the truth in love.

Jesus further said, “Do good to them that hate you.” By doing good, a child of God will show that she is different from them. Try to discover a way to meet some of their needs. By meeting their needs, the character and nature of Jesus Christ is revealed from the heart. They may doubt the sincerity of this at first. However, if you are consistent in doing good works, God will be able to put great pressure upon them. They will see good works and glorify God.

Jesus taught further and said, “Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Prayer is essential as a weapon to use in spiritual warfare. A previous lesson in this series emphasized the prayers of Nehemiah. Jesus specifically included prayer as one of the weapons used in the struggle to overcome opposition.

A Word of Caution

Christian leaders have a responsibility to protect the flock of God. To live the life that Jesus described in Matthew 5:43-44 does not mean that leaders can allow just anyone to be in the church. A person must be born again to be a member of the church. It is the pastor’s responsibility to make sure that a person has repented of her sins before she is baptized.

Further, pastors must lead the people into a holy, separated life. They must not be afraid to preach holiness. If sin is found to be in the church, the pastor must deal with it. Paul was talking about sin in the church when he said in I Corinthians 5:5-13:

“To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Know ye

not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. . . . But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Conclusion

Christians have often been called upon to meet and overcome opposition as they have lived their lives for God. Employ one or more of these spiritual weapons and God will give victory.

In Romans 12:12-17, Paul described a Christian: "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not. . . . Recompense no man evil for evil." Then he concluded the chapter by saying, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:19-21).

God's Word teaches that Christians are strong. True Christians will be ones who overcome. They will not be weak or fearful. Ephesians 6:10-11 says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." God does not intend for His children to be defeated. He wants His people to overcome Satan, the flesh, and all other enemies of God. He desires His leaders to learn how to use the weapons He has designed for victory.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. What is your response to the statement that "God has enemies"? _____

2. Name those who might be considered the “enemies of God.” _____

3. List those things that appear in “Satan’s Toolbox of Opposition.” _____

4. Can you add anything to the list of tools that Satan will use to oppose you in your work for God? _____

5. Explain how Satan will use a lie against a man or woman of God. _____

6. How will you be able to discern the truth about people whom Satan is using to oppose your work? _____

7. Define *innuendo* and describe how it was used against Nehemiah.

8. What qualities did Nehemiah manifest that enabled him to resist and overcome the opposition presented by Sanballat and Tobiah? _____

9. List God's spiritual weapons as found in the box in this lesson. _____

10. Can you add any more to the above list? _____

11. Why is it important for people of God to live overcoming Christian lives?

12. What is an enemy and how does Jesus say to treat him? _____

13. What does Jesus teach us to do concerning those who curse us? _____

14. What does Jesus teach us to do concerning those who hate us? _____

15. What should we do in regard to those who despitefully use us and persecute us? _____

16. Describe the precautions that a leader must take since he is the shepherd of the flock and responsible for its welfare. _____

17. What should a pastor do concerning the teaching of holiness even if there could be some opposition to it? _____

18. What did Paul teach the Corinthians concerning a little leaven and how did he apply this teaching to the Corinthian church? _____

19. What did Paul teach concerning evil in the last verse of Romans 12?

20. In regard to opposition, temptation, and the like, a true Christian will have what kind of characteristic? _____

Lesson 8

Nehemiah: The Administrator

By Pastor Prempeh (of Ghana)

Key Verse

“Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work” (Nehemiah 2:18).

Leadership Quality

Delegation

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Understanding the Need

A one-man show is undesirable.

Years ago a pastor started a church in a certain town and managed to win a few converts. He decided to hold teaching and preaching services with them. Unfortunately for him, none of the converts had the ability to lead the prayer sessions. None of them could even sing the revival songs or play the drums to make the revival services lively.

Realizing his plight, the pastor decided to lead the initial services until some of the new members could learn to take up some of the responsibilities. In each service, he taught the Sunday school lesson, led the praise and worship segments, received the offertory, preached the sermon, and said the closing prayer. Finally, he pronounced the benediction to dismiss the small congregation. In the process of time, the pastor became so overwhelmed with the numerous responsibilities that eventually exhaustion overcame him and rendered him ineffective.

Does this story sound familiar? Sad to say, it portrays the picture of many pastors and other Christian leaders. It underscores the fact that many Christian leaders have not fully realized the importance of good administration and effective delegation in having jobs successfully accomplished. Whatever the reasons, experience has proven that leaders who extensively use delegation always accomplish much more than those who do not.

Jethro's Counsel to Moses

Before Nehemiah ever appeared in Jewish history, Moses had already tasted the difficulties of singularly getting jobs done. In Exodus 18, Moses set up a court to arbitrate matters among the Israelites in the wilderness. When Jethro arrived at the scene, he noticed that his son-in-law was working too hard and wearing himself out. Jethro threw a searching question to Moses over his court procedure: "What is this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?" (Exodus 18:14).

Moses' answer seemed defensive but justifiable, "Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another" (Exodus 18:15-16).

Unfortunately many Christian leaders as well fit into this picture of Moses. The result of such a position is obvious. Leaders soon wear themselves out before achieving their best. This is tragic. Jethro's reaction and counsel following Moses' defensive answer was timely. It was timely enough to help Moses and other leaders in his footsteps to escape self-martyrdom: "The thing that thou doest is not good. . . . Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God . . . And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee" (Exodus 18:17-22).

Since the time Jethro offered Moses such a wonderful principle of delegation, great leaders in succeeding generations have used this principle to achieve great success.

Jesus Christ Used Delegation

Jesus Himself used the principle effectively in the choosing of the twelve disciples, in the sending out of the seventy, and still in the delegating to His followers today. He said, “The works that I do shall [ye] do also; and greater works than these shall [ye] do, because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12).

How is it possible to do greater works than Jesus? In one way, it is because there are more people doing the works. He has delegated responsibility and authority to His church. He said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore . . .” (Matthew 28:18-19).

“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).

Nehemiah, the Leader Who Delegated

Many biblical scholars describe Nehemiah as a classical example of a leader with great insight into the principle of delegation. He successfully used delegation to accomplish a very difficult task. In fifty-two days his vision of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem was successfully completed. How could he have built such a great wall alone? If he was able to accomplish it, it was because he skillfully and effectively used delegation.

Nehemiah’s Style of Delegation

Nehemiah began with a personal assessment of the magnitude of the work. When he returned from his feasibility studies of the project, he planned and organized the work into forty-two segments (Nehemiah 3).

Warren Wiersbe said of Nehemiah:

Like all good leaders, Nehemiah knew he could not do the job alone. One of his first official acts was to appoint two assistants, his

brother Hanani and Hananiah. The two were to work with Rephaiah and Shallum, rulers of districts in the city.

You can never achieve great leadership without effective delegation. By delegation, you will increase the job commitment of others by spreading your task effectively over a broader base.

Nehemiah Assigned Responsibilities to the People

The next thing Nehemiah did was to assign each segment to a specific group of people with particular personal qualities and interests.

Before the work began he inspired the people by assuring them that God would prosper their efforts (Nehemiah 2:18-20). When the people were afraid, he prayed that God would strengthen them (Nehemiah 6:9). When the enemy threatened, Nehemiah stood his ground and called their bluff; and the work was completed in fifty-two days to the glory of God. (Warren Wiersbe)

Nehemiah Made More Appointments

Nehemiah appointed the gatekeepers to open and close the gates at the right time in the morning and evening. Guards were also appointed “to patrol the walls at specific stations and those to keep watch near their own houses (Nehemiah 3:10, 23, 28-30). With guards at the gates, watchmen on the walls, and a solid neighborhood watch, the city was safe from outside attack” (Warren Wiersbe).

The Principle of Delegation

If Nehemiah was able to delegate so effectively, any leader can apply the same principle for similar results. M. M. Feinberg, when stating seventeen ways a manager can show his skills, emphasizes, “Delegate, delegate, delegate. Assuming your people are competent and ambitious delegate to them as much of your burden as you can” (Ted Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader*).

A good leader delegates to achieve goals. He consults a great deal before making important administrative decisions. When it comes to implementation of

the decision, he assigns sizable parts of the job to subordinates while he concentrates on the most important ones.

This is clearly seen in the early church of the Book of Acts. The church was growing and some responsibilities were being neglected. The apostles were trying to do all of the work. Members started murmuring because widows were being neglected. The great leaders of the church had lost sight of their priorities to the extent that they were waiting on tables.

They realized that “it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.” Deacons were appointed and the responsibility was delegated to them. Priorities were rearranged. The apostles gave themselves to the ministry of the Word and to prayer. (See Acts 6:1-7.) Once delegation was used and priorities set in order, “the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied . . . greatly.”

In order for Christian leaders to effectively use delegation to achieve their goals, a thorough understanding of this principle is necessary.

Understanding Delegation

According to the British Institute of Management, *delegation* is “the process of entrusting authority and responsibility to others in a way which enables them to make the decision their superior would otherwise make as opposed to merely carrying out the superior’s detailed instructions.”

Howard Hendricks also defines *delegation* as “the on-going process by which a manager assigns additional responsibilities and authority. These are assigned in such a way that a degree of burden or personal accountability is produced within the individual.”

Ed Roebert adds, “when delegation is properly done it will always stir up within the person to whom the task has been delegated a sense of responsibility and a feeling of privilege.”

In school, it was a common practice among the teachers to delegate some of their responsibilities to maintain order and cooperation to capable pupils. The pupils who were fortunate to receive such delegated responsibilities and authority were highly elated. They performed their duties superbly. They

perfectly organized and controlled the rest of the pupils to clean the compound and maintain order before the teachers arrived. These pupil-leaders visibly demonstrated a sense of importance and prestige. The delegation worked and achieved its purpose.

Look for the Appropriate Qualifications When Delegating

Ed Roebert states, "Delegation is not merely assigning routine tasks to anyone who happens to be available."

Nehemiah did his homework well and sought for men with outstanding qualities: faithfulness to God and fear of God.

According to Carl George, four spiritual considerations have to be made when selecting leaders for service:

1. *Marked by love for God and man (Matthew 22:37-40)*. It is said that John Wesley's number one requirement in selecting a leader was, "Truly alive to God, with love for God and man."
2. *Willing to serve (Matthew 20:26)*. People will not voluntarily follow a leader unless they know that he or she cares for them.
3. *Willing to learn (Philippians 2:12-13)*. This is a necessary requirement for improvement and competence.
4. *Growing in Christian character (I Timothy 3:1-13)*. This qualification relates to one's personal life, family life, and public life.

The Great Benefits of Delegation

Ed Roebert lists the following as some of the advantages of delegating:

1. Delegation helps you to concentrate on those special aspects of your job that need your personal skills, experience and "know-how." Those who do not delegate are eventually overwhelmed by their jobs.
2. Delegation relieves you of burdens that can be shouldered by others.
3. Delegation builds the morals of your people. It develops their self-confidence and their ability to assume more responsibility. If you do not delegate, your people become staid and dormant and as a result they lose their motivation.

4. Delegation helps you to spend more time planning for the future.
5. Delegation will result in an increase of the total amount of work accomplished.

Delegation Techniques

Ed Roebert says, “Delegation plus motivation equals success. Delegation of responsibility must be accompanied by the delegation of authority. Responsibility without authority is very demotivating.”

He also offers a mathematical formula for successful delegation:

Successful Delegation = Responsibility + Authority + Motivation + Follow-through + Avoidance of that which negates.
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If Christian leaders are going to succeed in their ministry like Nehemiah, then they will have to learn how to delegate.

Talent Spotting

David Flowers offers important counsel regarding the art of delegation. According to him, delegation begins with spotting people who have the suitable talents, gifts, abilities, interests, and aptitudes. This is followed by looking for those loyal ones who will accept responsibility, lead others, and share your vision and burden.

Job Description

The next step of delegation is to assign tasks, being as specific as possible in describing the job. A job description is a written, personalized document that describes three major things:

- *Responsibility*—the activity to be involved in. The responsibility should be challenging enough but not over challenged so they can grow.
- *Authority*—the right to carry out the responsibility. The authority should be enough to perform the task.

- *Accountability*—liable to give an account. Kwadwo Asare Bediako, a Ghanaian management consultant, observed, “People do what is inspected, not what is expected.” Accountability should spell out who a person is accountable to and receiving direction from. It should also define who is accountable to her and will be looking to her for direction.

It is improper to delegate to a superior or an equal. One’s delegation can only be done to those under his authority, that is to say, those who are accountable to him.

Summary

In closing, delegation is indispensable if Christian leaders are to achieve significant growth and expansion in their ministries. Learn from Nehemiah the great administrator and delegate for more and more results.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. What was the resulting effect on the pastor who tried to do everything in the church and services? _____

2. What will be the result on those in the church if the pastor does everything? _____

3. What problem was Moses having in Exodus 18? _____

4. What wise counsel did Jethro give to Moses? _____

5. Give three examples of the way in which Jesus Christ used delegation.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

6. What is one way we can do greater things than Jesus did? _____

7. Describe Nehemiah's style of delegation. _____

8. According to Ted Engstrom, what qualities are necessary before you can delegate a task to someone? _____

9. Describe the problem that emerged in Acts 6 in which the apostles were involved. _____

10. How did they solve the problem? _____

11. How does the British Institute of Management define *delegation*? _____

12. How does Howard Hendricks define *delegation*? _____

13. What does Ed Roebert add to the definition of *delegation*? _____

14. According to Carl George, what four characteristics must be present in a person to whom one delegates work in the church?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

15. According to Ed Roebert, what is the formula for success? _____

16. What must accompany responsibility in the delegation process?

17. What is the result if authority is not delegated with responsibility?

18. What characteristics are necessary in those to whom a leader would delegate tasks? _____

19. Describe a "job description." _____

20. What did Mr. Bediako advise as to the work that people will do? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 9

Progress Brings Challenge

By David L. Flowers

Key Verses

“But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them” (Nehemiah 4:7-9).

Leadership Qualities

Courage, consistency, clarity of thought, preparation, prayerfulness

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

The Jews were proceeding with the building of the walls of Jerusalem and making great progress. It seemed that nothing could stop them from accomplishing their goal now. They could rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem so that God’s people would “be no more a reproach” (Nehemiah 2:17). This was the place God had “chosen to set [his] name” (Nehemiah 1:9). The people “had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6) and had united themselves together for the cause of Jerusalem. They were accomplishing the task of rebuilding the walls. The work was rapidly going forward!

The Enemy

Then the enemy began to act. But wait a moment. Wasn't this God's work? Had not God laid upon Nehemiah's heart the desire and burden to do this work? Had not God Himself provided the means by which Nehemiah could accomplish the task of rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem? The answer to all these questions is YES!

However, there is an enemy. He is always watching the progress of God's people. When the work of God is in a state of ruins and no one is seeing after God's people, the enemy is happy and needs to do nothing. He is winning. When the work of God is progressing, *the enemy will begin to act* in order to interfere and stop the work. Leaders should not think they cannot face opposition because they are doing God's work. Leaders are not insulated from the attacks of the enemy. Truthfully, spiritual leaders will be buffeted more often when they are succeeding because of the kind of work in which they are engaged.

Notice what Paul said about the apostles:

"For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day" (I Corinthians 4:9-13).

A leader should teach the saints that under normal circumstances the enemy *will* attack those who work for God. Truly, when the work of God is *not* facing opposition from the enemy, the leader should evaluate the work to see if, in fact, the work of God is progressing or not.

Nehemiah and the Jews did not face an attack from the enemy until they began to work. When God's people are doing the work of God, they are attacking and tearing down the kingdom of Satan. God's work and His kingdom are in direct conflict with Satan's kingdom and work. An example of this is the words which Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to

destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The First Attack

"But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" (Nehemiah 4:1-2).

The Jews were challenged with ridicule, insults, and criticism. They were mocked, vexed, offended, derided, and disgraced with verbal assaults. The enemy had hoped to make them lose heart. He hoped to defeat them by belittling them. However, this was only a test for Nehemiah and the people. They had a great desire to finish their work, and they were full of courage. They would not easily be put off their task.

Satan is the enemy, and he will oppose those who work for God. He will use every resource he has to discourage and stop the work. Jesus said in John 15:20-21, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." At times it may seem the battle is against people, not Satan. But remember the enemy is Satan, not some person.

Paul said:

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:11-12).

Who Was Attacked?

Nehemiah recognized that this attack was actually against God. It was not people but God who was being provoked.

God's people are just the servants. People may think and act as if they are attacking a person, but really they are attacking God. They cannot see God or fight against Him except by fighting His people and attacking His work on the earth. Those in the ministry should work with the same thought Paul had in II Corinthians 5:20: "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

In Acts 3:6, after the lame man asked Peter and John for alms, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." When he was healed, the lame man "entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."

This stirred up quite a commotion, and Peter and John had the attention of all the people in the Temple. Peter began preaching and convincing the people that Jesus is the Christ and that they needed to repent and be converted so their sins could be blotted out. As they spoke to the people, the priests, captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees came in and were angered to hear them preaching about Jesus. They reacted by taking Peter and John and putting them into the "hold" or jail.

The next morning the Jewish leaders saw that the lame man had indeed been healed, and that a notable miracle had occurred. Did they rejoice over the miracle? No. Acts 4:18 says, "And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." They threatened the apostles and warned them not to speak in Jesus' name anymore. "So when they had further threatened them, they let them go."

However, the Book of Acts reveals that the persecution progressed from threatening, to beating, to imprisonment, and even to death. The attack against the church became increasingly harsh because the apostles and those of the church preached the name of Jesus.

Saul of Tarsus was responsible for leading severe persecution against the church. However, when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, Jesus asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Though Saul had been physically attacking the people of the church, he was actually attacking Jesus.

The Method of Defense

According to Ephesians 6:12-18, God's people "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Saying this may seem strange when it is obvious that the opposition comes through people. It must be realized that Satan is using people to oppose God and His kingdom. Many times these people do not realize this. They do not know that Satan is able to use them.

Satan is also able to use demonic activity to oppose God's work. However, this too is usually expressed through people who have yielded themselves to these spirits. In Acts 16:16-24, a damsel possessed of a spirit of divination proclaimed for many days that Paul and Silas were men of God. When Paul rebuked the spirit and it came out of her, her masters became angry and brought Paul before the magistrates. The result was that Paul and Silas were beaten and put into prison. However, after prayer and worship God wrought a great deliverance for Paul and Silas that produced the first converts in Philippi.

Satan fights against God by attacking His people. Nehemiah saw that this attack was not against him, but it was against God. What was his defense? He *prayed!* Why did he not counterattack? Why did he just pray and continue to work on the walls? Nehemiah knew that the battle belonged to God. Furthermore, if Nehemiah had stopped the work to fight back, the enemy would have accomplished his goal: to stop the progress of the work.

The best defense is to pray and continue doing the work of God. In spite of all the opposition of the enemy, Nehemiah and his people kept working. "So built we the wall" (Nehemiah 4:6). Do not become discouraged and stop work. Continue working for God. In I Corinthians 15:58, Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Your best defense against Satan and his attack is prayer and faithfulness. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

Continued Progress Brings Greater Challenge

When Sanballat and those with him realized that the tools of ridicule, insult, and criticism were ineffective, they became angrier and determined to take further action. They began to fear that Nehemiah and the Jews would be successful because they could see “all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof . . . and . . . Sanballat . . . heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped” (Nehemiah 4:6-7).

Sometimes success in doing God’s work will bring His enemies together. They try to build up each other’s courage and belief that together they can stop God’s work. Their rallying point is the effort to defeat what is being done for God. “And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it” (Nehemiah 4:8).

This is a false sense of courage. Do not fear their unified threat because the battle is still God’s. Continue to focus on doing the will of God. He will work as long as God’s people focus on doing His will.

How Did Nehemiah Meet This New and Harder Challenge?

Did Nehemiah change his battle plan now that the threats were physical and not just verbal? “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night” (Nehemiah 4:9). They continued to place their faith in God and pray. However, because of the changing situation, they set a guard in preparation for the attack of their enemies. They asked God for His help and protection. They believed that God would fight with them. They made themselves ready to defend the cause of God. They knew that if God allowed the enemy to attack, He would give them a miraculous victory.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41) were the words of Jesus to Peter and the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane when the hour of His trial and their temptation grew near. A child of God must be on guard and fight against temptation.

When Jesus spoke to His disciples concerning the time of His second coming, He said, “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is” (Mark 13:33).

The people of God have no control over some things such as temptation or the second coming of Christ. All that can be done is to be on guard and watch. Leaders must do what they can for their people, the work, and themselves while they put their trust in God. God is the “very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (I Corinthians 3:9).

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:20).

Conclusion

Though the enemy is formidable, God is greater and able to defeat him at every turn. Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18). He will put His enemies under His feet! The church will be victorious, because the enemy is attacking Jesus, not just the people of God! The method of defense is to pray for God’s help and to continue to labor for Him. Leaders and their people cannot slow down or leave God’s work undone. If they do, Satan has won a victory. Though continued progress brings new challenges against the church, it is only a sign that the enemy knows the task is being accomplished. Pray, watch, and work, for the battle is the Lord’s.

The best defense is a good offense.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. When God is at work and the kingdom of God is making progress, the devil cannot work. To answer, circle one: True False Why? _____

2. As a leader, what should you teach the saints concerning the enemy's attitude toward them? _____

3. When did Nehemiah and the Jews experience this attack from the enemy?

4. When you are doing the work of God, what are you doing to Satan and his kingdom? _____

5. In John 10:10, Jesus said that the thief, or our enemy, comes for what purpose? _____

6. What was the purpose for which Jesus came? _____

7. In the first attack, who was used by Satan to come against Nehemiah and the Jews? _____

8. When we are being attacked by people, we must remember that they are being used as the instruments of our enemy. Who is our real enemy? _____

9. What tactics were used by the Jews' enemies to conduct this attack? _____

10. What has God given to us to enable us to fight against the wiles of the devil? _____

11. How do people fight against God? _____

12. While Saul of Tarsus was physically attacking the people in the church, who was he really attacking? How do we know this? _____

13. What was the progression of the persecution in the Book of Acts? _____

14. We know that people persecute the church. Yet Paul says we wrestle not against flesh and blood. How can we reconcile these two statements? _____

15. What was Nehemiah's defense when he was attacked? Why? _____

16. Why did Nehemiah simply pray and continue working on the wall when he and his followers were attacked? _____

17. When you are attacked, why is it the best defense just to continue doing what the Lord has called you to do? _____

18. Write Paul's words in I Corinthians 15:58. _____

19. Write Paul's words in Ephesians 6:18. _____

20. What is it that sometimes unites God's enemies? _____

21. Why should the people of God not fear the enemies of God when they unite? _____

22. What did Nehemiah and the Jews do when they found out the enemy was very angry and had threatened to battle against them? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 10

Uniting the People: The Leader's Greatest Challenge

By Randy Adams

Key Verse

“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6).

Leadership Qualities

Motivator of people, team builder, man of vision, full of the Holy Ghost, wise, responsible, mentor

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Without doubt, one of the greatest challenges that leaders face is how to bring the people together in unity to accomplish their goals and visions. The Book of Acts contains many examples of the power of unity. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost occurred as the people were together obeying the command of the Lord Jesus to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Unity was necessary to accomplish the work of the Great Commission.

What is the role of leaders in bringing about unity among the people?
How do they do it?

Unity: Amazing

One evening, a missionary was sitting in his home after a busy day, reading and studying his Bible. As he sat there, he noticed something very interesting and strange. He was amazed to see a peanut moving slowly but steadily across the floor near where he was seated. Knowing that peanuts do not walk or move on their own power, he took a closer look.

Many small ants were transporting the peanut. The peanut was many times larger and heavier than all the ants put together. Yet it was being carried by many small legs upon many small shoulders (if ants have shoulders). Obviously, these ants understood the importance of getting together to accomplish an otherwise impossible task.

In all ages, leaders have successfully faced extremely difficult tasks. One of the key elements of their success has been unity among their followers.

In 1885, Lord Kelvin, the then president of the English Royal Society, a scientific organization in England, said, "Heavier than air flying machines are impossible." But in 1903, in America, two brothers, Orville and Wilbur Wright, took their first successful flight in a heavier than air flying machine: the airplane. They united their efforts and accomplished the impossible.

Today, the church is challenged to fulfill the Great Commission to evangelize this world. God did not intend for one person to do this alone. Each member of the church has been baptized into the body of Christ. The body of Christ has many members, but it is united into one body. All who are a part of this body must realize their place and fulfill their role in the work that God desires to see done in this world. Therefore, unity among the people of God is the leader's greatest challenge!

Nehemiah's Leadership

Nehemiah was a man with a mission or a calling. He had a vision for Jerusalem and the spiritual welfare of his people. Nehemiah 2 records many of the things done by him in order to begin his work in Jerusalem:

- His appeal to the king along with subsequent agreements and arrangements.

- His arrival in Jerusalem along with all his preparations before he told the people.
- His awareness of the responsibility and difficulty.
- His first encounter with the enemies who would oppose him.

Someone has well said, "If your vision is not bigger than yourself, then your vision is too small." Nehemiah knew that the task was larger than he was able to do alone. Therefore, at the right time, he told the people about the things God had put in his heart. When they heard it, they became enthused and desired to join Nehemiah in the work. They said, "Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work" (Nehemiah 2:18).

Addressing Sir Winston Churchill, the prime minister of France once said, "If you do great things, you will attract great men. If you do small things, you will attract small men. Small men usually lead to problems." He was not speaking of men small in stature, but rather men of small thinking, deeds, and vision.

Nehemiah's vision became the people's vision. His dream became their dream. Under his leadership, they began to dream things they had never thought possible before. As he communicated his vision to the people, they united together to work toward the fulfillment of that vision. They were motivated to join Nehemiah in his work. It became their work too!

Unity Led to Teamwork

Nehemiah organized them into teams so they could work together, each unit fulfilling its own role. By forming them into working groups, other leaders began to emerge who helped each crew focus on its assigned area of work. Nehemiah 3 records the names of some of these men: Eliashib, Zaccur, Hassenaah, and so forth. One of the benefits of unity is that other leaders can begin to emerge to help carry the vision and fulfill the call.

Nehemiah was a man of daring. Because he had courage, his people accepted the challenge of building the wall. Together they overcame all the obstacles from outside their group: the enemies that opposed them, the ridicule, false accusations, scorn and spitefulness. "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work" (Nehemiah 4:6).

The Leader Must Promote Unity

In I Corinthians 1:10, Paul wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For . . . there are contentions among you.” Paul was pleading for unity in the Corinthian church. Some of their contentions were based on the following points:

- personalities of preachers
- the wisdom of this world
- spiritual immaturity

Some people are so immature they cannot see the need for unity. They put their own personal interests above everything else. They fail to put the work of God above their own desires. This is a subtle form of idolatry in which a person is really placing himself above the kingdom of God.

Paul further said, “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (I Corinthians 3:8-9).

Paul was appealing for unity of mind and purpose in the church. One of the greatest enemies of God’s people is disunity within the church. If the church can have a unity of mind and purpose, then it can unite and organize its efforts so that the maximum benefit can be realized for the kingdom of God. This is one of the greatest challenges a leader can face. When unity is accomplished, it will produce the greatest fruit of his ministry.

Paul constantly taught churches about the need for unity:

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:1-5).

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Philippians 2:19-21).

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (I Peter 3:8).

The Need for Unity: Purpose

For Nehemiah, unity was needed to accomplish the purpose: to build the wall around Jerusalem. For the church of Paul’s time and ours, unity is needed for the following reasons:

- so that world evangelism can be accomplished,
- leadership can be developed and enhanced,
- each church and individual can be edified and strengthened.

This requires not only unity of purpose, but also unity of effort called organization.

As Nehemiah developed goals by which to accomplish the task, his people joined together to do the work. When united the people generated and expended tremendous energy.

Within the church, leaders must develop understandable goals so their people can unite to accomplish the work of God. The goals should be defined and communicated clearly so the people understand what is expected of them. When they understand, they will be able to work together under godly

leadership to accomplish the tasks. This is the leader's greatest challenge. This will produce the greatest fruit in his ministry.

The Leader's Spirit

Sometimes leaders will make excuses and try to explain why some particular work cannot be done. This is not good. This projects a spirit of laziness or disinterest.

Notice what Jesus said:

"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours" (John 4:34-38).

The reason some leaders are weak is that they do not eat the spiritual food that gives strength. The bread of obedience is the food that will make you strong. That is, to do the will of God. When leaders eat the bread of commitment to do the will of God and finish what God has called them to do, they will find themselves possessing new strength and power. God's field is white unto harvest. God is interested in getting reapers to go into the fields. Leader, let that become your task.

Jesus' instruction is "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields." Focus on the work to be done. Focus on the will of God, not personal convenience. Understand that rewards (wages) will be given to those who gather fruit unto eternal life. Find a place in the cycle of sowing and reaping that God has established. God has sent His church to reap. Get busy.

Leaders' spirits will affect their people. That is why they are leaders. They talk about the work of God that needs to be done. They motivate the people to be involved. They want to share in the planning and the work. They respect the

people enough to allow them to have input in the planning and then allow them to help do the work.

The Apostles, Unity, and the Work

In the first five chapters of the Book of Acts, the church was growing rapidly. However, the apostles were getting busier and busier because the church was growing so very large. In chapter 6, problems began to surface because some of the widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The apostles found that they could not do everything.

Adjustments were needed because the unity of the church was being threatened. When unity is being threatened, the progress of the church will slow or stop. Leaders need to be aware that they cannot do everything. At some point the church will get so large that they will need helpers to assist in the work of the church.

The apostles decided to appoint seven men who could do the work and they could do the most important things in the ministry of the Word of God. These were to be men who were of honest report and full of the Holy Ghost. They had to be qualified and able to accept responsibility.

The Bible records that these men were appointed. The need was met and the threat of disunity was averted. The church continued to grow.

Summary

Leaders are responsible for the progress of the work they are leading. Wise leaders will recognize that the most valuable asset in their work is their people. Wise leaders will use their people, but foolish leaders will abuse them.

Unity among any people is a powerful force. In Genesis 11:1-9, when the people were building the great Tower of Babel, God said, "Behold, the people is one . . . and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." Here, God acknowledged that unity among the people will get the job done even among unbelievers.

Leaders must promote unity among their people. This enables the work to progress. Leaders will have the help they need in doing the work of God. Unity will create a tremendous amount of energy toward accomplishing the task that needs to be done. The faith of people will flow together. The work will be done. God will be glorified.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Without a doubt, what is the greatest challenge that leaders face with regard to their people? _____

2. Give examples where unity played a role in the events of the Book of Acts.

3. Give examples in which unity has played a part in achieving seemingly impossible things. _____

4. How does God describe the church so that we can understand the unity He desires within His church? (Hint: we are all baptized into it.) _____

5. What did the people say when Nehemiah shared his vision with them?

6. What did Nehemiah do to make it possible for the people to work together in unity? _____

7. What was one result of the teams of people that Nehemiah organized?

8. What is another trait Nehemiah had that allowed the people to accept the challenge of building the wall? _____

9. What were some of the points of contention among the Corinthian believers that made Paul plead for unity among them? _____

10. In your own words, describe how people could cause disunity in a church because of a preacher. _____

11. In your own words, describe how the wisdom of this world could cause disunity in a church. _____

12. In your own words, describe how spiritual immaturity could cause disunity in the church. _____

13. Why did Nehemiah need unity among his people? _____

14. Why does the church need unity in the day that we live in? _____

15. Explain why goals are important in establishing unity. _____

16. What happens when a leader is lazy? _____

17. What did Jesus say about the importance of being involved in the reaping of the harvest? _____

18. What is one thing that is going to happen in terms of leadership as the church grows? _____

19. How did the New Testament handle the problems that were created by growth? _____

20. What did God say when men were building the Tower of Babel that lets us know the strength unity can produce? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 11

Identifying and Overcoming Enemies Within, Part I

By Pamela Smoak

Key Verses

“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. And our adversaries said, they shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease” (Nehemiah 4:10-11).

Leadership Qualities

People conscious, good listener, motivator, focused, diligent, flexible, progressive, self-disciplined, self-sacrificial, problem solver

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Judah's Cry

Judah was the collective name for the people who were building the wall. They were members of the tribe or nation of Judah. Now, at the halfway point of the work, a problem had emerged.

Many times, as people are involved in doing the work of God, problems arise. Sometimes the greatest problems do not come from the enemies outside the group but from within the ranks of God's people. The people of Judah who were speaking were not trying to create trouble for Nehemiah. They were the people doing the work. Their cry involved legitimate concerns such as:

- The work had been ongoing for almost a month. The wall was only about halfway completed.
- The people were becoming weary. The work they were doing was very difficult.
- The task was overwhelming. There was still much work to do.
- The enemies were constantly criticizing. Nehemiah and the people were constantly facing threats of harm and death.
- Negative thinking had begun. They were saying they could not finish the work.

The Leader's Response

In this situation, the leader's response is critical. His response reveals much about him and his leadership ability. If he does not effectively address the problem(s) at hand, he will lose his influence with the people. This means he will cease to be their leader. By responding effectively, he will show that he is the kind of leader the people can trust. He can gain credibility with his people. He can establish himself as a leader the people can depend upon.

Possible wrong responses might be the following:

- *He could fail to address the problem.* He could assume that everything will work out; or he could hope the problem will go away. Perhaps the leader will simply try to find the easy way to deal with the difficulties that arise. However, if the problem does not disappear quickly, it probably is not going to go away by itself.
- *He could overreact.* In this case the leader could be taking the problem too seriously. He could be overreacting, which leads to a greater effort than is necessary to solve the problem. Some problems will work themselves out without a great deal of difficulty. Discretion, judgment, and clear thinking are needed to avoid overreaction.

- *The leader could oversimplify the problem.* In this case, the leader may not be taking the problem seriously enough. Again, discretion, good judgment, and clear thinking are needed when leading God's people.

In every case, the leaders' responsibility is to know their people and the circumstances under which they work. Leaders must develop the sensitivity to know when those under them are in need of their help. Further, leaders need discretion and judgment to know how to meet the need.

The type of problem that Nehemiah and his people faced in this lesson requires that the leader listen to his people—so he can understand the nature and intensity of their difficulty.

The most valuable resource the church has is its people. Consequently, the most important responsibility leaders have is helping their people. Leaders must listen to the people in order to be effective.

The Leader's Ministry

The word *minister* is used to describe leaders when they are helping their people. It literally means "to serve." When the people are doing the work of God and the leader is "ministering" to their need, he is giving them service. He is meeting their needs. He is fulfilling what Jesus meant when He said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:26-27).

Discouragement's Intrusion

Nehemiah and the Jews had progressed to the point that the wall was about halfway complete. It would seem that, with this much progress behind them, the people would have been encouraged in their work.

Too often, people forget to look at all that has been accomplished. They forget to review what God has enabled them to do. These people of Judah had been working on the wall for about a month. Rather than looking at all they had accomplished, they began looking at other things:

- what remained to be done (“there is still much rubbish”),
- how they felt (“the strength of the bearers of burden is decayed”),
- the end of the work was not yet in sight. (The piles of rubbish were still all around, and the gates were not yet standing.)

To discourage means “to sap or take away the courage . . . to lessen enthusiasm for and so restrict or hinder” (*Webster’s Dictionary*). Discouragement is the result of a slow process that occurs as time goes by. It does not come suddenly; discouragement happens gradually. The people who were once enthusiastic found their enthusiasm lessened. Their courage had gradually eroded. They found themselves restricted and hindered. They felt defeated.

The enemy knew that if the people became discouraged, they would defeat themselves. Sanballat and Tobiah had relentlessly opposed the work of building the wall. Gradually, the people had become discouraged. This produced a state of double mindedness. Though they were working on the wall daily, they had already begun agreeing with the enemy that the wall could not be finished! James 1:8 says, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” Discouragement can cause you to be involved in something that is good, but doubt the success of it.

Fear’s Manifestation

Fear had also manifested itself among the people because of opposition from the enemies. Their threats and opposition caused fear to arise within the hearts of God’s people. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines *fear* as “the instinctive emotion aroused by impending or seeming danger, pain or evil.”

Fear is a very powerful motivator of men, but many times it has a negative result if it is not resolved. First John 4:18 says that fear has torment.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4:18).

The expression “paralyzed with fear” describes one result of fear. Fear is almost always the wrong reaction to adverse circumstances. Fear is directly related to discouragement in that both have to do with the loss or lack of

courage. Both of these affect the faith of God's people. Discouragement and fear will destroy faithfulness.

Many verses of Scripture exhort God's people to be faithful. Faithfulness is the result of keeping the faith and being determined in all circumstances. Faithfulness has to do with the personal commitment of the child of God in the midst of trouble. It does not mean that a person is ignorant of the problems, or that he does not know there are difficulties. Rather, faithfulness continues doing the work of God in spite of the problems. In the Bible, this is called patience and endurance.

Faithfulness through tribulation produces patience and character. (See Romans 5:3).

The Leader's Battle against Discouragement and Fear

Leaders must love their people because perfect love will cast out fear (I John 4:18). When leaders love their people, the apparent obstacles that are standing in the way of progress do not move them. They know the obstacles are there. They know that if the focus is on the obstacles, the work will stop. Great leaders will show the people how to go ahead and complete the work God has given them. They will motivate their people. They will show them how to deal with fear and discouragement through self-discipline and self-sacrifice. They will demonstrate their ability to create adequate solutions to the problems they and the people are facing.

Israel's Twelve Spies

Following the completion of their assignment in Canaan, the twelve spies reported to the nation. Ten of them spoke words of fear and discouragement. They agreed with Joshua and Caleb that it was a good land. It was a land that flowed with milk and honey. However, they also spoke about the cities with the great, tall walls around them. They viewed themselves as only grasshoppers in the sight of the giants of Canaan. The result was that the children of Israel did not have the faith to go into the land of promise.

Joshua and Caleb spoke words of faith and confidence in God. They knew about the problems, the cities, and the giants. However, they had faith in God.

All twelve of the spies were talking about the same places and the same things, but only Joshua and Caleb won the battle against discouragement and fear. Only Joshua and Caleb lived to enter into the land of Canaan.

In Nehemiah's situation, a watch was set in place. The threat used by the enemy to create fear was that they would come unaware into the midst of the people. Nehemiah and the Jews determined to be prepared by setting an armed watch or guard. By doing this, Nehemiah was inspiring faith. The Jews would be looking for the enemy to come. The leader was motivating his people to continue working on the wall by preparing them to meet the threat.

Nehemiah was demonstrating diligence in the face of enemies and obstacles. He demonstrated the same spirit that Peter wrote about in I Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The Bible teaches diligence in one's work and effort for the kingdom of God.

The fleshly tendency is to become cowards or to relax and become lazy. The flesh always wants to take the easy way out of difficulties. However, if a person really believes in something, she will be willing to stand for it.

The Saint's Spiritual Weapons

Nehemiah posted armed guards to watch for the enemy. Christians have weapons to use in their fight for the kingdom of God. Paul said, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (II Corinthians 10:4).

Further, in Ephesians 6:11-13, he said:

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Paul then proceeded to describe the armor of the child of God:

- girdle of truth
- breastplate of righteousness
- shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace
- shield of faith
- helmet of salvation
- the sword of the Spirit
- prayer

Children of God must learn to use these weapons in order to stand for God against the workings of the devil.

Personal Reminders

Once when David was away from his home, the Amalekites came and destroyed the city and took captive the families of David and his men. The circumstances were such that everyone was very discouraged and “greatly distressed.” Some of the men even spoke of stoning David. However, the Bible says, “But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (I Samuel 30:6). No doubt David remembered the things God had done for his men and him in the past. Then David consulted with the Lord through the priest and received direction from God. By using his faith in God and the weapons of spiritual warfare that were at his disposal, David was able to fight the enemy and recover all that he had lost.

Nehemiah had to remind his people why they were building the wall. “Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses” (Nehemiah 4:14). The people were working because the God they served was with them. Nehemiah reminded them of the strength and power of their God. Further, he reminded them they were working for their brethren, sons, daughters, wives, and houses, not just for themselves. Their success would provide security and help for the ones they loved.

Remember:

- Noah did not build the ark just for himself. He also saved his family from the flood.
- Moses did not come out of Egypt alone at the age of eighty. He delivered the whole nation of Israel.

- David was not the only one to celebrate when he defeated Goliath. The victory belonged to God, and all of Israel celebrated and participated.
- Solomon was not the only one who enjoyed the Temple he built. The people of Israel and others from around the world came and worshiped at the Temple.

Each of these men was a leader who by his success, blessed himself, his family, and his people. When leaders inspire others to succeed, the effects reach farther than just those who are directly involved. The blessings of leaders' successes affect their family, their church, their community, and their world.

Recasting the Leader's Vision

At this point, Nehemiah exercised what has become known as the "Nehemiah Principle." This principle states that every twenty-six days, a leader must recast his vision so the people can refocus on the purpose of their work. It is certain that people forget the reasons for what they are doing. It is the leader's responsibility to direct the people in such a way that they remain enthusiastic about the work they are doing for God.

Satan and the enemies of God endeavor to divert the attention of God's people away from their purpose. The leader cannot be presumptive in assuming the people will automatically keep their focus on God's purpose. The leader must restate the vision in such a manner that the people are able to regain their vision and refocus on their purpose.

Summary

Discouragement and fear are enemies that come from:

- physical or spiritual weariness,
- the attack of the enemy,
- negative thinking,
- the burden and responsibility of the work.

The enemy wants God's people to lose the vision for the work God wants done. He wants God's people to begin to see the difficulties of doing the work of

God. This will make the people of God begin to agree with the enemies of God. By doing this, the progress of God's kingdom will be stopped or hindered.

Leaders must seize this opportunity to do several things:

- Recast the vision. Let the people see again what God wants to accomplish through them. Let them see the extent to which the result will bless them and their families.
- Use the spiritual weapons God has given. These weapons are able to defeat anything that opposes the work of God.
- Minister to the people's needs. Leaders must speak words of encouragement and faith. They must create the plans and means by which the enemy can be resisted and defeated. Leaders must remind the people of the positive consequences of their work.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Name ten leadership qualities listed in this lesson.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
- G. _____
- H. _____
- I. _____
- J. _____

2. Identify who is referred to as "Judah" in the Key Verse. _____

3. Describe some of the legitimate concerns of Judah at this stage of building the wall. _____

4. Why is a leader's response to problems important? _____

5. What are three wrong ways a leader can respond to problems?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

6. What is the most valuable resource the church has? _____

7. What is the literal meaning of the word *minister*? _____

8. Explain what Jesus meant in Matthew 20:26-27. _____

9. Does discouragement come quickly or gradually? _____

10. Although fear is a powerful motivator, it usually has negative results. Explain why. _____

11. Words are powerful. When the twelve spies returned from Canaan, ten spoke words of _____ and _____. However, Joshua and Caleb spoke words of _____ and _____.

12. Faithfulness requires that a person ignore problems and deny that they exist. Circle one: True or False

13. According to I John 4:18, what will cast out fear? _____

14. Describe how a leader can battle against fear and discouragement.

15. List one verse of Scripture that teaches Christians to be diligent in watching out for our enemy. _____

16. Using II Corinthians 10:4 and Ephesians 6:11-13, explain what a believer's spiritual weapons are. _____

17. When David became discouraged, how did he respond according to I Samuel 30:6? _____

18. When leaders succeed, they provide security and help for those they lead. For each of the following men, tell who was positively affected by their success.

Noah _____
Moses _____
David _____
Solomon _____
Nehemiah _____

19. Explain the "Nehemiah Principle." _____

20. Discouragement and fear are enemies that come from what three sources?

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

21. In summary, what are the three main things a leader can do to overcome the enemy within?

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

Lesson 12

Identifying and Overcoming Enemies Within, Part II

By Pamela Smoak

Key Verses

“And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews . . . Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards” (Nehemiah 5:1, 5).

Leadership Qualities

Anger, self-control, clear thinking, creativity in problem solving, positive attitude

The People’s Cry

A quick review of the first four chapters of the Book of Nehemiah reveals that many enemies, problems, and difficulties had been overcome. Now, the people could get back to work, or so it seemed.

Just when it seemed that the people's problems were sorted out, another problem emerged that threatened to divide the people. The Book of Nehemiah says there was a "great cry." This cry was not against some enemy who was threatening to attack them from outside their camp. This cry revealed a deep problem involving all the people of Judah who were building the wall around Jerusalem. This was not Sanballat against the people of Judah. This was the people of Judah divided against themselves.

Leaders of any endeavor never know from where a problem will come. However, they must be prepared, because problems will surely come. Their reaction will largely determine the outcome. They must find a creative solution to every problem. However, the problems that arise that can divide the people are many times the most critical.

Satan's efforts to stop the work of God are made very easy when God's people begin to be divided against one another. He does not have to do anything. Satan can stand back and laugh when the people of God are fighting against one another. This is why unity among God's people is very important. When they are united, they can defeat Satan. When they are divided, they are very weak.

The Causes of Strife

Since Babylon had conquered Jerusalem, the lives and living conditions of the people had been very difficult. Because they were subject to an external power, they had to pay taxes to a foreign monarch who ruled them. Many of the people had been taken captive into far-off lands where they were forced to live and work to survive. Those who had either remained in Jerusalem or returned later were struggling under difficult circumstances. In order to pay the high taxes, many of the people had borrowed money, for which they were being charged interest until they could pay the money back.

Others mortgaged their land, houses, or other property. If they could not pay off the mortgage, their property could be taken to make the payment.

Still others pledged their children as slaves to get the money to pay their taxes and live. Some of the children already had been taken as slaves and were now the property of other people. The parents and families had become so poor that they could not buy back their children. They were powerless to redeem them.

All of this had created great debt. This, together with the usury that had to be paid, caused the people to feel great oppression. Poverty was something with which they were very familiar.

In addition to these things, while they were building the wall, the city of Jerusalem was experiencing a dearth of corn. This means they were not producing enough corn. This was probably due to a drought that had hit the area. So, in addition to taxes, now famine menaced the land. Food had become very expensive and could not be abundantly produced locally.

Debt, usury, high taxes, mortgages, drought, famine, and enslavement of their children had contributed to the very hard circumstances in which these people found themselves. It was at this point the people cried out.

The Leader's Reaction

Some things that happen are beyond anyone's control. Leaders cannot control drought and famine. However, leaders can deal directly with some problems. Nehemiah found himself in a situation in which both of these elements were involved. On one hand, the people were caught in the midst of circumstances over which they had no control. On the other hand, some of their own people were taking advantage of these circumstances to oppress their brethren.

Nehemiah became angry. Many people think that anger is sin. However, the Bible speaks of anger specifically and tells God's people how to deal with it. "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26-27).

At times leaders will feel anger concerning things happening around them. Anger is an emotion just as joy is an emotion. However, anger should not be allowed to remain a long time since it could lead a person to commit sin if it is not resolved. Unresolved anger will allow Satan the opportunity to work in a person's life and tempt her to do evil. A wise leader will realize that when she feels anger, it is an emotional signal God has installed in her to help her. She must begin considering how to bring about a righteous solution to whatever circumstance she is facing.

How then should leaders deal with their anger? Patience is needed as a control to anger. Please observe the following verses of Scriptures: "He that is

soon angry dealeth foolishly” (Proverbs 14:17). The message here is that a person who loses control of his temper quickly will do foolish things that he will regret later. It might be said that he “flies off the handle” or “loses his temper.” The Bible teaches us to control our anger and not lose it quickly. Please observe the following verse, which says much the same thing but from a different point of view: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

Notice the following:

- Being slow to anger is better than being a strong warrior.
- Ruling your spirit is better than being the conqueror of a city.

James 1:19 says, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

The message that comes through from these verses says that one must control anger. Leaders must keep their ire under control at all times. They should not become incensed over every little thing that happens. “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” (Proverbs 14:29). People are going to do things that leaders will not approve of. People will say things that are not correct. Leaders must recognize when this is happening and know what to do. Above all, they must not lose control of their temper. Patience is a virtue.

Destructive Anger

It is wrong for leaders to express the kind of destructive anger that comes from the desire for revenge or retaliation. They should never have anger that expresses jealousy, gossip, or other sins. If leaders allow their anger to express these things, they have not successfully dealt with it. They have lost control. Maybe they have allowed it to stay in their hearts without dealing properly with it. This kind of anger will lead them to commit sin against God and people. They will ultimately lose their influence with their people. This will cause them to be unable to lead them any longer, because leadership is influence.

Righteousness and Anger

However, we know that sometimes people, including leaders, still experience anger. When Moses saw the people worshiping the golden calf, he became so enraged that he took the tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments, threw them on the ground, and broke them. On two occasions, Jesus became furious because of what the moneychangers in the Temple were doing. Can anyone doubt the fury of God when He beholds the unfaithfulness or sinfulness of humanity?

Anger is caused by strong feelings about something. However, it cannot be allowed to remain for a long time. Wrath in the life of a leader must lead him to take strong measures to bring about a constructive end. He must ask himself why he is incensed and what needs to be done to bring about that which will be good for him and his people.

Take a few moments and discuss other instances in Scripture in which a person became angry.

- Did this person control his or her anger?
- What were the results of the anger?
- Were they good or bad? Discuss.

When a leader feels anger, she must be careful to keep a “clear head.” That is, she must think through her actions very clearly so that she does not create more problems when she deals with the situation. This is especially true when the thing causing her anger involves what other people have done.

Nehemiah 5:6 says, “And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.” The unrighteous treatment of some of the Jews toward their brethren caused Nehemiah’s ire. The more he found out about the way the rulers and leaders were treating the poor Jews of Jerusalem, the more concerned he became. The next several verses reveal the process that he followed in dealing with his anger.

“Then I consulted with myself” (Nehemiah 5:7a).

- Nehemiah maintained his self-control. He began thinking clearly about what he had learned.

- Before he did anything, he made sure he had all the facts. Not only did he know about the problem and about what each group had done to the other, he also knew the background of the problem (see verse 8).
- He identified the different parts of the problem and those who were involved.
- While he was thinking all of this through, he began to develop a plan of action that he would follow in dealing with the problem.

After this process of thinking and planning, Nehemiah then went to the guilty ones and told them what they had done. He clearly understood and stated the problem. “I rebuked the nobles and the rulers and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother” (Nehemiah 5:7b). He informed them of what he had learned.

“And I set a great assembly against them” (Nehemiah 5:7c).

The reason for the great assembly against the ones who had done wrong was that the wrong done involved all of the people. This was not a matter that involved only one or two people. If it were, he would have called only those that were actually involved. A leader certainly cannot afford to be the one who spreads gossip or communicates a private problem to those who are not concerned or involved.

The only people a leader should discuss a problem with are:

- the ones involved,
- the ones who are witnesses, and
- the ones who are responsible for the problem or the solution.

Since this problem seemed to involve the whole congregation or city, Nehemiah called a meeting with all of the people.

Leaders should investigate thoroughly and then be ready to render a judgment as to what should be done based on the facts that they have been able to uncover. “And I said, 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?” (Nehemiah 5:9). The controversy was stemming from a lack of the fear of God. Nehemiah showed them that because of what they were doing, they were making themselves a reproach before the heathen nations that were around them. They were violating known principles of Old Testament Scripture that said they could not charge

usury of their brethren from their nation. (See Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-37; Deuteronomy 23:19)

The Example of the Leader

Not only was Nehemiah telling them what he thought they should do, he had already been practicing these things before he knew about the circumstances. “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 5:10).

This is an example of “practice what you preach.” As governor, he had the right to tax the people and to be chargeable to them. However, he did not exercise this right because he feared God. (See Nehemiah 5:14-19.)

Nehemiah was already living in harmony with this teaching of the Old Testament concerning usury. It made him a powerful example of what he was saying to his people. This is an example of how leaders must fear God and work out the principles of righteousness in Scripture for themselves. They must apply those principles to their own lives even though no one else will know about it. Then, when the pressure and the problems come, they do not have to apologize or change their lifestyle. They are already practicing righteousness and living in the fear of God. This is why the Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. This is what personal holiness is all about.

The Solution

In bringing about a solution to the problem, Nehemiah emphasized several points:

- The people needed to manifest the fear of God (verse 9).
- Allowing the people of Jerusalem to be brought into bondage and lose all they had would be a great reproach before the enemies of God (verse 9).
- He had shown them by example that this kind of life could be lived (verse 10).
- The solution was a reasonable one: that is, to leave off the usury.

Now he had brought them to a point where restitution could occur and a restoration of fellowship could be established. This is what a leader should strive for. In verse 11, Nehemiah pleaded that they restore to the poor people their lands, vineyards, olive yards, houses, money, corn, wine, and oil that they had taken.

In verse 12, the rulers and leaders agreed to make the commitment that he was requiring of them. They said, "We will restore them and require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest." Nehemiah did not stop here. Once he had secured their agreement, he went even further and required of them an oath or a vow that they should do according to this promise. He knew they might lapse back into their old way of thinking and acting. He wanted to lead them to a commitment they could not forget. Because this was very serious before God, he even had a warning for them. (See Nehemiah 5:12-13.)

It may not be necessary in every situation to have the people involved in a problem to make a vow in order to resolve it. That will depend on the merits of the circumstances. Some people will want to change and obey the Word of God and their leader. Others may need extra encouragement. It is the leaders' job to know their people so they can know what is required to create and maintain peace.

Summary

Many times the most serious problems a leader faces are those arise among the people of God. These conflicts destroy peace and harmony. They create an atmosphere where progress is impossible. When God's people are fighting each other, it is very difficult for them to be fighting the devil. Satan can use internal strife to halt the work of God.

It is the leader's responsibility to bring about peace and harmony so the work of God can go forward. Sometimes in his investigations, he will discover serious problems that exist between the people of God. He may be tempted to become angry. When he does, he must move quickly to use the energy from that anger to motivate him to resolve the problems as quickly as he possibly can.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. What are five leadership qualities as listed in this lesson?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____

2. What was the “great cry” of the people? _____

3. What happens when the people of God are united? _____

- 4... What happens when the people of God are divided? _____

5. Briefly describe the cause of the strife. _____

6. What agricultural situation compounded the problems and poverty of the people? _____

7. Can leaders control every situation and problem that comes against them or their people? _____

8. What was Nehemiah's reaction to the financial situation that existed among the people of Judah? _____

9. How should a leader deal with anger? _____

10. List three verses of Scripture that instruct us how to deal with anger.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

11. List four negative results of destructive anger in a leader.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

12. Give an example of Jesus becoming angry. _____

13. Explain the process Nehemiah followed in resolving his anger. _____

14. Who are the only people with whom a leader should discuss a problem?

15. In what way did Nehemiah “practice what he preached”? _____

16. After Nehemiah “rebuked the nobles and the rulers,” what was their reaction to that rebuke? _____

17. In summary, how does strife among the people of God affect the work of God? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 13

The Call to Compromise

By David L. Flowers

Key Verses

“Now it came to pass when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:1-3).

Leadership Qualities

Focus, persistence, discernment, knowledge

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Nehemiah and the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem had been rebuilding the walls of the city in the midst of great opposition. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem had tried to stop the work by many forceful, direct methods. Now, the wall itself was complete; only the setting of the gates remained to be done. Sanballat and his allies knew that when the gates were in place, the defense of Jerusalem would be complete. However, if they could keep the people from hanging the gates,

then all the work on the walls would have been for nothing. Without the gates, Jerusalem would be defenseless. The enemy knew it was the last chance to defeat the work of fortifying Jerusalem. Since the direct method of attack had failed, Sanballat decided to try compromise. The enemies of God were becoming desperate to stop the work.

We must know our enemies if we are to successfully deal with them. Sanballat was a governor from a neighboring region. According to Nehemiah 13:28, his daughter was married to the grandson of the Jewish high priest. Tobiah apparently was a Jew whose family, according to *Holman Bible Dictionary*, had gone to Ammon when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. Many of the nobles of Judah had sworn allegiance to Tobiah because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah, the son of Arah, who was one of the original families that had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. Tobiah's son had married the daughter of Meshallam in Jerusalem. Meshallam was the son of Berechiah, who was one of those who were working on the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. (See Nehemiah 6:17-19.)

It is often true that the people who ask us to compromise are friends or people from our own group or family who are well respected. They use these connections to try to influence those who are vulnerable to compromise their beliefs. Micah 7:5-7 says, "Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend . . . a man's enemies are the members of his own household. But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me" (NIV). Where spiritual things are concerned, there is no friendship so valuable that we must compromise our principles, doctrines, or morals to keep that friendship. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of our salvation.

The Invitation

Sanballat invited Nehemiah to meet him in one of the villages of the plain of Ono. According to both *Holman Bible Dictionary* and *Nelson Bible Dictionary*, the word *Ono* means "grief." If we stop the work of the Lord to counsel with the enemy and even consider compromise, we will be brought to grief. Changing our message or our standards may initially appear to have benefits: possibly a larger congregation, more community acceptance, or a lessening of the persecution. In the end, though, compromise only brings grief. The congregation gained by compromise will be swayed by some wind of doctrine and soon lose their zeal. Community acceptance will turn to disdain that our principles could be so easily

changed. The lessening of persecution will only confirm that we are no longer a threat to the enemy. He already has us on his side!

Sanballat sent a message to Nehemiah urging him to meet with them. He gave no reason. He offered no benefits. He did not provide the topic of discussion or an agenda of the meeting. They only wanted Nehemiah to stop his work and meet with them. They appealed to his pride.

According to history, Sanballat was the governor of Samaria. He was an important person appointed by the king to rule a neighboring region. It would have been a great honor to have an audience with Sanballat, especially at his own request. Possibly, it would have elevated Nehemiah in the eyes of his fellow laborers to be seen in conference with the governor of Samaria. The ministers of God must guard against pride. If the enemy's efforts to compromise the minister's morals fail, he will try to accomplish his goals by appealing to his pride. Many ministers have stopped the work and come down to grief because of their pride. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). If pride is the guide, the path never leads up, but always down.

Nehemiah discerned that Sanballat, Geshem, and Tobiah meant to do him harm. In II Corinthians 2:11, Paul wrote that we are not ignorant of Satan's devices. According to Ezekiel 44:23, the priests of the Old Testament were to teach the people of God the difference between the holy and the profane and cause them to discern between the clean and the unclean. The ministers of God are not only to be able to discern between good and evil themselves, but they are to teach the people of God so they may be strong in the doctrine and principles of God when false teachers try to persuade them to compromise their beliefs. A sign of mature Christians is that they can eat the strong meat of the Word. (See Hebrews 5:12-14.)

The Answer

Nehemiah had a very strong, straightforward, and truthful response: "I am doing a great work. I cannot come down to you. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?" Let us examine the three parts of Nehemiah's answer.

- 1. "I am doing a great work."**

There were no hesitations or questions, because Nehemiah knew what he was doing was important. He knew he was in the will of God. Nehemiah remembered the great burden of sorrow that overcame him when he heard of the sad situation of the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem. Chapter 1 records the burden that gripped him and caused him to fast, pray, and weep over the despair of the Jews. It caused him to repent for his people and to remind God of the promise that He would hear their cries of repentance. Nehemiah was confident that he had been directed by God to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.

Ministers who have forgotten their first love and the burden that caused them to weep for lost souls and answer the call of God upon their lives can be persuaded to compromise. Without that memory alive in their hearts, they cannot say with certainty, "I am doing a great work."

The daily struggle and routine of ministry can dim or even erase that first burning conviction that they are in the will of God. That is why Paul admonished Timothy to remember to stir up his gift. Paul then asserted that God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind that we would not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. (See II Timothy 1:7-8).

If we fail to maintain our relationship with God and our love for Him, we will be vulnerable. If the enemy is able to cloud our mind with fear, doubts, and misunderstandings, he will slow our work. Then we will be more easily persuaded to change our message, our morals, or our standards. Ministers of God must *know* they are doing the work of God and it is a great eternal work.

2. "I cannot come down to you."

Second, Nehemiah said, "I cannot come down to you." Any compromise of our message or our purpose is a step down. Once headed downhill, it becomes easier and easier to continue in that direction. It takes tremendous effort, energy, and determination to stop the downhill motion and begin going back uphill. Repentance is required to change the downhill direction and to begin again the ascension to where we were. Very few people have the willpower or the control over their pride to admit they have started going in the wrong direction, to repent and turn around. Only with the grace of God is repentance possible. The best solution is to never take that first step "down" in the direction of compromise.

3. "Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?"

Third, Nehemiah said, “Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?” He had divided the work on the wall among the Jewish families. Each family was responsible for a different section of the wall or gates. If someone did not do his part to fulfill their obligation in building the wall, the enemy would have had an opportunity to enter the city.

Nehemiah was the leader. If he were not there to encourage, supervise, or correct disorders, the work would have stopped completely. If the enemy can remove, distract, or render ineffective the leader, the work of God will stop. When Paul was confronted with false apostles and deceitful workers in II Corinthians 11:12, he said, “I will keep on doing what I am doing” (NIV). Paul admonished Timothy to “take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee” (I Timothy 4:16). A minister’s responsibility is not just to himself, but also to the saints that he leads. If a minister leaves his work to compromise with the enemy, the work will cease and there will be confusion and indecision. Indecision will also be among the saints.

Try, Try Again

Sanballat sent four messages to Nehemiah. Each time, Nehemiah gave the same response. He stood firm in his resolve. Our enemy will be very persistent in approaching us to get us to compromise. Of course, his ultimate aim is to cause the work of God to stop.

When Delilah was plotting the downfall of Samson in Judges 16, she too was persistent. Three times she pleaded for Samson to “tell me . . .” Verse 16 says that “she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death.”

The difference between Nehemiah and Samson was their response. Nehemiah gave a simple, truthful answer and never changed it. He did not elaborate on his position. He did not try to trick or deceive Sanballat. He did not make excuses. He simply remained committed to the cause to which he felt God had called him. He just said that he would not come down.

Samson, by comparison, did not speak truthfully. He played a game of trickery, trying to use his own wits to fool Delilah. In the end, he lost the game. The enemy of God won.

Alone, we do not have the strength or wisdom to do battle with Satan. That is why we need the whole armor of God. We are not fighting against flesh and blood or human intellect. We fight against rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness. We need the “word of wisdom,” the “word of knowledge,” and the “discerning of spirits.” First Corinthians 12:7-10 contains a list of the gifts of the Spirit by which we can wage warfare against Satan.

Samson acted foolishly by answering from his own heart. “A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps. A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, a fool is hotheaded and reckless. A quick-tempered man does foolish things” (Proverbs 14:15-17, NIV). Be led of the Spirit before giving an answer. Answering from our hotheaded foolishness may provide Satan with the very means to our downfall. Samson kept changing his answer each time Delilah asked the secret of his strength. Each time he got a little closer to telling Delilah the very information that caused the Spirit of the Lord to depart from him.

Falsely Accused

Sanballat sent his servant with an open letter to Nehemiah containing false reports that he had made up about Nehemiah. He claimed that his ally Geshem could verify the false accusations. The letter said the Jews were rebuilding the wall because they intended to rebel against the king. The letter claimed Nehemiah wanted to make himself king. It went so far as to say that Nehemiah had appointed false prophets to preach that there was indeed a king in Judah. Sanballat then threatened to report all these things to the king. He concluded the letter by again issuing the invitation for Nehemiah to come down and take counsel together with the enemies of God. The letter was an open threat. Sanballat was trying to frighten Nehemiah into compromising. He tried to anger Nehemiah into stopping the work and coming down to refute the false charges.

Jesus taught that we are blessed when men revile and persecute us and say all manner of evil against us falsely for His sake. He said we are to rejoice and be glad for we have a great reward in Heaven. (See Matthew 5:11-12.) Just because the devil changes his tactics does not mean we are to change our answer to him. Nehemiah again stated the truth, saying, “Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind” (Nehemiah 6:8, NASB).

In II Kings 19, when Hezekiah received a letter from his enemy, he went up to the house of the LORD and laid the letter before the LORD. When open

threats and accusations come against us, our help is in the Lord. Lay the matter before Him and seek His wisdom and His judgment against your enemies. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). In I Peter, the writer encourages those who are falsely accused. He says that those who have accused them will be ashamed or that they will see their good deeds and glorify God. God can turn these persecutions into a great testimony for His glory.

"Strengthen My Hands"

Nehemiah again discerned the true purpose of his enemies. Verse 9 reveals that Sanballat was just trying to frighten the Jews and Nehemiah into stopping the work. Nehemiah prayed that God would strengthen his hands. Nehemiah did not hesitate. He did not contemplate giving in. He simply asked that God would give him the strength to continue his work. We must daily pray this prayer.

When Asa became king of Judah, the nation was in great trouble. He began to lead the people back to God. The prophet Azariah went to King Asa with a message from the Lord concerning the kind of leadership God wanted from Asa. The message concluded with this promise: "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded" (II Chronicles 15:7). God desires that His people work from a position of strength and power. That is why we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is God's divine enabling.

Paul prayed:

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:14-21).

When the invitation comes to us to compromise our message, we must go to God in prayer and pray that He would strengthen us and make us strong against the enticement of Satan. We have many promises of God's help in our times of weakness. (See Philippians 4:13; Isaiah 35:3-4; II Corinthians 12:19; and Ephesians 6:10-12.) The Lord will deliver us from our enemies. It has been said that "God will do for you what you cannot do; while you wait for Him, do what you can do." There will be times that the onslaught of Satan may seem to overwhelm you. However, as you continue to do the work of God, He will intervene for you, strengthen you, and give the victory.

All Things to All Men

We must not compromise our message, our principles, our morals, or our standards. These are absolutes for which there is no compromise. However, we must be flexible in our approach to communicating the gospel to different people.

The life of Paul is a good example. When he was speaking to the Jews, he addressed them in Hebrew and spoke to them of his Jewish education. When he was dealing with Roman rulers, he stressed his Roman citizenship. When speaking to the intellectuals on Mars' Hill, he quoted their own poets. He truly became "all things to all men" as he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul's method:

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (I Corinthians 9:19-23).

Paul understood that the gospel must be preached with consideration as to whom was hearing it. Different groups of people can relate to different methods and styles of presentation. Paul was flexible in the locations where he

preached the gospel: in jail, by the riverside, in courts of law, palaces, synagogues, Bible schools, by firesides, on the road, in the home, and so on.

We must be responsive to the leading of the Spirit of God. If we meet someone to whom we can minister on a bus, boat, train, street, or in a house, church, or market, we must be willing to be “all things to all men” that we might by all means save some. Paul taught by letter, mass crusade, one-on-one, church services, and his own trials. We must be ready to use radio, crusades, churches, Bible studies, Bible schools, pamphlets, books, telephone, computer, and any other method at our disposal to reach the lost.

Nevertheless, we must *never* compromise our message. Acts 2:38 proclaims the truth in any language, any culture, any situation, or by any means. The truth is still repentance, water baptism by immersion in Jesus’ name for the remission of sins, and the infilling of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues followed by the fruit of a holy life, clean before God. This we must *never change!*

Summary

If we compromise the truth, the work will cease. Flexibility with our methods, facilities, programs, plans, or approach can be a useful tool if we do not compromise our message. We must keep in mind the goal of what we are trying to accomplish and be adaptable in our methods, but not change our goal. Salvation of souls through the gospel of Jesus Christ can only be accomplished with the true message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, we do need to be flexible in the vehicle with which we communicate the message cross-culturally.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Why was it important to finish the last phase of this work: the setting up of the gates? _____

2. From where do the people who ask you to compromise many times come?

3. Concerning our natural family and friends, what must be our attitude concerning spiritual things? _____

4. In the end, what is the usual result that comes if a person compromises?

5. If the enemy's efforts to get a minister to compromise on moral grounds fail, to what will the enemy most likely appeal? _____

6. Why must ministers of God teach their people the difference between good and evil? _____

7. What was Nehemiah's response to Sanballat's invitation to come down to Ono? _____

8. Why was this the right response? _____

9. What must a minister of God know before he can say, "I am doing a great work"?

10. Why is it important that a minister never take that first downward step of compromising the truth of God's Word?

11. What is required to change the downward direction of compromise once it has started?

12. Why does our enemy make every effort to get a leader to come down and compromise?

13. Why was Nehemiah's response to the temptation to compromise better than Samson's?

14. Why do we need the “whole armour of God”? _____

15. What does Proverbs 14:15-17 say about the simple man, the wise man, the prudent man, a fool, and a quick-tempered man? _____

16. In Matthew 5:11-12, what did Jesus say concerning false accusation? _____

17. What does Paul say in Romans 12:19 concerning vengeance? _____

18. What prayer did Nehemiah pray when he was falsely accused and threatened by Sanballat? _____

19. While we must not compromise our message, standard, morals, or the Word of God, we must be flexible in what area? _____

20. If we compromise the truth, what will be the result? _____

21. In Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21, what did he ask God for concerning the following points:

A. To be strengthened with might how?

B. That we be rooted and grounded in what?

C. To be able to comprehend what?

D. To know what?

E. To be filled with what?

F. Unto Him who is able to do what?

G. How?

22. Summarize I Corinthians 9:19-23. _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 14

A Leader's Personal Battle

By David L. Flowers

Key Verse

“Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah . . . who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the Prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear” (Nehemiah 6:10-14).

Leadership Qualities

Clear thinking, refusal to do wrong, discernment, steadfastness, clearness of vision, allowing God to get vengeance

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Slander and *betrayal* are ugly words. No leader would ever desire to have to face them. Yet, when people of God desire to do something great for God, they may very well face these very problems. Worse, they may face them from those they should be able to trust, their friends. This is possibly one of the most difficult battles leaders will face.

It will test leaders on a very personal level. It will test their ability to think clearly and to refuse to do wrong even when a friend is proposing the wrong deed in the guise of trying to be helpful to the person of God. It requires discernment. It will test the leaders' steadfastness and love for truth and things that are right. This is a test of a leaders' knowledge of God, His Word, and His will. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this is the leaders' spirit will be tested. Will they try to get revenge, or will they let God take the vengeance?

The Trap Is Set

The Jews' enemies were still determined to stop the building of the wall around Jerusalem. However, nothing they tried had worked. Now they launched a highly deceitful and treacherous attack. It was aimed directly at Nehemiah. They tried to get Nehemiah to go into the Temple to save himself. It was all done in a pretense of concern for Nehemiah's safety. They wanted Nehemiah to do a foolish, sinful thing that they then would use against him to shame him and destroy his credibility.

The plot involved some trusted friends who had the reputation as prophets. Shemaiah was Nehemiah's friend. Noadiah and several others were known as prophets. Nehemiah came to the house of Shemaiah who had shut himself away with these others for the purpose, supposedly, of meditation or prayer. They projected a very spiritual image to Nehemiah.

This is a danger of which a man of God must be aware. He must understand that not everything or everyone who looks spiritual is saintly. A leader cannot go by the image or the appearance of a person. The person may appear to be godly or holy. They may speak in a pious manner projecting concern, love, or other divine qualities. However, appearance or image is not the test a leader must use. John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the

spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). A leader must learn how to "try the spirits."

Paul's admonition to the church at Thessalonica was similar: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). This means that God's people not only have the right to know if something is true or not, they have a responsibility.

These prophets proposed to Nehemiah that he should meet with them in the house of God, the Temple, and shut the doors so that he might hide from the enemies. They seemed to be very concerned for Nehemiah's safety lest the enemies come to kill him in the night. They were even offering to be there with him.

Clearness of Thought

Nehemiah knew that the Word of God forbade that he or anyone else except the priests should go into the Temple. Numbers 18:7 says, "Therefore thou [Aaron] and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for everything of the altar, and within the veil: and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." As Nehemiah began to think about their proposal, he realized that, according to the Word of God, he could not go into the Temple. He wondered why someone such as himself should flee from the enemies. More so, why should someone such as himself flee into the Temple? He knew this violated God's revealed will. Hereby, Nehemiah demonstrated great clearness of thought.

When something violates God's written Word, *it is wrong!*
"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin
against thee [God]" (Psalm 119:11).

Discernment

God's written Word is His revealed will. It is the guide for all of God's people. The Word of God became the basis upon which Nehemiah discerned the error in what these people were saying. One of the most important aspects of discernment is the knowledge of the Word of God. The psalmist penned these words so that God's people would know where to turn for guidance:

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light
unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Nehemiah 6:12 says, “And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me.”

This is a rather dramatic example of a leader exercising discernment in a very difficult situation. Because he determined that these “friends” were suggesting that he should violate God’s Word, it became very easy to see who was behind these suggestions. Nehemiah could see that his enemies, Sanballat and Tobiah, were hiring his “friends” so that they could put fear in his heart. Using fear, they would cause Nehemiah to do things he would never have done normally. By this means they would destroy the credibility and leadership of Nehemiah.

Refusing to Do Wrong

Fear is a tool Satan frequently uses in plotting the destruction of God’s leaders. It may come in the form of “peer pressure”; that is, the fear of what others think about a person may be used to cause him or her to do a wrong thing. Or it may come from “false friends,” such as Nehemiah’s. Perhaps it could come from “false accusations” that cause a person to do some wrong deed to prove something. Regardless of the source, fear is a powerful motivator in many people’s lives that Satan can use to cause people to do wrong.

God’s Word speaks about fear. Many times God and His leaders have said to the people of God, “Fear not.” In the first chapter of the Book of Joshua, God spoke to Joshua, the newly appointed leader of the nation of Israel. God charged him to lead the people into the land of Canaan and finish the work Moses, His servant, had begun. God assured him that he would have success, that no enemy would be able to stand before him, and that God Himself would be with Joshua as He had been with Moses. God promised that He would not fail Joshua or the people of Israel. Notice that after He had said these things to Joshua, God spoke further to Joshua:

- “Be strong and of good courage” (verse 6).
- “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law” (verse 7).

- “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid neither be thou dismayed” (verse 9)

God knew Joshua would have a battle with fear. He knew how powerful fear could become in the life of a leader. God not only encouraged Joshua to “be strong and of good courage,” He told him the secret of this strength and courage. The secret was the Word of God. God told him to meditate in the Word, to obey it, to not turn from it to the right hand or the left hand. God said that if Joshua would do this, “then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (verse 8).

Steadfastness

God told Joshua to not turn from His law to the right hand or to the left hand. In other words, be steadfast.

It is often true that people know what is right, but they do not act on it. Many have been those who knew what was right but would not do it. This means they were not steadfast in their walk with God. Some examples of this lack of steadfastness are as follows:

- Adam in the Garden of Eden
- Samson in his work as judge
- Judas Iscariot in his relationship with Jesus Christ
- Demas in his relationship with the apostle Paul

Nehemiah’s decision not to follow the advice of his former “friends” revealed his true character. While they were endeavoring to instill fear in his heart, Nehemiah’s steadfastness was revealed.

- *Nehemiah was steadfast in his faith.* He never stopped doing what he believed God had called him to do. He constantly obeyed the Word of God.
- *Nehemiah was steadfast in his example.* If he had quit the work for his own safety, his people would have thrown down their tools and run for safety also.
- *Nehemiah was steadfast in his prayer life.* At the end of our Key Verse for this lesson, Nehemiah prayed that God would think upon those

enemies that would have put him in fear and reward them according to their works.

The Wall Is Finished!

Nehemiah 6:15-16 records that the people completed the wall of Jerusalem in just fifty-two days. The enemies who had tried every conceivable method to hinder and stop the building of the wall “were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God” (Nehemiah 6:16). Because of the faith, patience, and endurance of Nehemiah and his people, they realized victory. God had blessed this vision of Nehemiah.

Does this mean the battle was finished? Does this mean the enemy had been completely defeated to never be seen again? The sad answer is no. The enemy was still there to carry on his fight against the Jews. Nehemiah 6:17-19 records that the same enemies were still attacking Nehemiah.

More Slander and Betrayal

Even though the wall was built and the city was secure, the enemy still attempted to thwart the efforts of Nehemiah. Jews who lived in Jerusalem were reporting Nehemiah’s activities to Tobiah.

Though Tobiah was the servant or slave of Sanballat according to Nehemiah 2:10, 19, it was common in these times that such a servant would bear rule over the people in the name of his master. Both Tobiah and his son, Johanan, had married Jewish girls whose fathers were notable among the Jews. An alliance existed between Tobiah and certain Jews. Even though they were helping Tobiah to the harm of their own country, they persisted in communicating with him.

Some people do not see the dangers of intermarriage with ungodly people. Paul said, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God” (II Corinthians 6:14-16). *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* points out that, concerning

Jewish marriage with the heathen, “For one heathen that was converted by it ten Jews were perverted.”

Leaders often see people who do not understand the consequences of their own actions. They seem to be ignorant or unconcerned about the evil effects their actions will have on their loved ones and even themselves. They choose their ungodly friends and associations rather than fellowship with God’s people.

Much can be learned about people by observing who their friends and associates are. Whom do they praise? These are the people they admire. They imitate their actions, and they embrace their values. You can often tell much about people by the friends they keep and the people they praise.

These Jews were reciting to Nehemiah the good deeds of Tobiah just as surely as they reported Nehemiah’s words to Tobiah. Every leader should know that if people talk to him about others, they talk to others about him.

Leadership’s Most Vulnerable Point

All leaders face the possibility of slander and betrayal at the hands of those close to them.

When Moses was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, who led the rebellion against him? Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, along with two hundred and fifty princes of the Israelites gathered themselves against Moses and Aaron. The Bible says these men were famous in the congregation, men of renown. (See Numbers 16:2.) After this, Moses faced the same kind of problem with his own brother, Aaron, and his sister, Miriam.

David’s most heartbreaking conflict was the one in which his own son, Absalom, rose up against him. When David mourned for his son who had betrayed him, the men of Israel quietly went to their tents. This was one of the weakest moments in David’s reign as king.

Paul spoke of the false apostles of his day: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

Even Jesus Christ had a Judas Iscariot as one of His disciples.

A leader's most vulnerable spot is that of the people who are close to him. This is where he is least guarded. This is where the pain of slander and betrayal is the greatest.

Overcoming Slander and Betrayal

Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). In the work of building the kingdom of God, it is not one nationality against the other, such as Nehemiah and the Jews faced with the Samaritans. It is a work of faith using spiritual tools and weapons. Jesus has given us those things that will be most powerful in building the kingdom of God.

Our enemies are those that are warring against us in the spirit. They resist the authority of God that He has placed in the leader. Jesus said to love your enemies. We must show a right spirit toward others when they are showing a wrong spirit. When others curse you, speak against you, and slander you, bless them. That is to speak well of or to that person. When someone is despitefully using you or persecuting you, it means first that they may be prosecuting you by law. Second, it means to unjustly accuse and to injure in any way possible. For these people, you are to pray.

One part of Jesus' directions said to do good to them that hate you. The apostle Paul said:

"Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not. . . .
Recompense to no man evil for evil. . . . live peaceably with all men.
Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to
wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the
Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him
drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not
overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12: 14-21).

Just as Nehemiah kept building the wall, leaders must keep working at the vision God has given them. Leaders should not think they are too good to go through slander and betrayal. They are no better than any other person who has been a leader under God. Romans 12:3 says, "For I say, through the grace given

unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

Do not lose the vision God gave. That is the leader’s salvation and victory. In Nehemiah 6:15, when the wall was finished, there was nothing else to say. The victory speaks for itself. Be persistent. Do not give up. Keep trying. Depend on the vindication of God.

Summary

Every leader will face the problems of slander and betrayal. Often, the experience will originate with people who are close to him or her. Leaders must love God enough to go ahead and do what is right in every circumstance. This is the area where they will be proven as spiritually mature. It is here that they must be overcomers.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. In this lesson, what difficult situation did Nehemiah face? _____

2. On what personal levels will leaders be tested when they face betrayal at the hands of their friends? _____

3. On what pretense did Nehemiah’s friends suggest that he flee into the Temple? _____

4. What would have been the result if Nehemiah's friends had succeeded in getting him to go into the Temple? _____

5. Who was involved in the plot to cause Nehemiah to do this evil? _____

6. What does the Bible say we must do in regard to spirits? _____

7. What is meant by the word *prove* that is found in I Thessalonians 5:21?

8. Why did Nehemiah refuse to go into the Temple? _____

9. What should be understood when something violates the written Word of God? _____

10. What is the single most important aspect of discernment? _____

11. When Nehemiah recognized that the suggestion of his friends violated the Word of God, what did he realize about who was behind the suggestion?

12. What were Nehemiah's enemies trying to put in his heart by suggesting that he go into the Temple? How would they use this to stop the work?

13. Why would the enemy try to instill fear in the heart of a leader?

14. What word did God use that was opposite of *fear* when He spoke to Joshua in chapter 1 of that book? _____

15. What three things did God tell Joshua to do in order to be strong and of good courage?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

16. What did God promise to Joshua if he did these three things?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

17. What did God mean when He told Joshua not to turn to the right hand or to the left? _____

18. What was revealed about Nehemiah when he did not follow the advice of his former friends? _____

19. In what three things was Nehemiah steadfast?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

20. How many days did it take for Nehemiah and his people to finish the wall?

21. How did this affect the enemies of Jerusalem? _____

22. Did the enemies go away and stop bothering the people of Jerusalem, particularly Nehemiah? What did they do? _____

23. Describe how Tobiah had a relationship with the Jews. _____

24. What does Paul say about interrelationships in I Corinthians 6:14-16?

25. What does Matthew Henry point out about the effect of Jewish intermarriage with the heathen? _____

26. At what point is a leader the most vulnerable? _____

27. What did Jesus say to do to our enemies?

A. To those that curse us?

B. To those who spitefully use us and persecute us?

28. What did Nehemiah do when he faced betrayal and slander? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 15

Going the Extra Mile: A Lesson on Personal Sacrifice

By Jim Poitras

Key Verses

“Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, . . . that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, . . . yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. 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. Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. 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. Think upon me, my God for good, according to all that I have done for this people” (Nehemiah 5:14-19).

Leadership Qualities

Self-sacrifice to meet a need, ability to see a challenge, going beyond the call of duty, servant spirit, flexibility, self-motivation

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

The spirit and challenge of this lesson is illustrated by the following article from an African newspaper:

The small child attending a Christian school in Africa who gave his teacher a beautiful shell as a Christmas present knew the real secret of life. When the teacher learned he had walked many miles to find the extraordinary shell, she said to the footsore boy, "You should not have gone all that way to get a gift for me." His eyes brightened as he answered, "The long walk is part of the gift."

There can be no real giving that does not involve
the giving of ourselves.

Jesus said, "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matthew 5:41). When Jesus spoke these words to His disciples, the Roman government ruled all of Palestine with an iron hand. According to Roman law, their soldiers had the right to compel the people to carry a load for one mile. Jesus adopted the "extra mile" principle, and He asked His disciples to do the same.

This lesson emphasizes the importance of self-sacrifice in the life of leaders as well as the reward that is to be gained as they go the "extra mile."

Nehemiah's Sacrifice

Nehemiah saw the need.

Nehemiah faced a task much greater than himself. Although the challenge was great, he recognized the necessity of accomplishing the task because the future of his people depended upon it. This was the motivating factor in Nehemiah's life.

All great leaders recognize that the future of their people depends greatly upon the sacrifices of the present: Moses, Joshua, David, Paul, and, of course, Jesus Christ. All these men saw the need of their people and faced the challenge with an attitude of selflessness because they understood that the end result

would be greater and more important than the sacrifice that they would make along the way.

Nehemiah's Attitude toward Himself and the Need

From the verses of Scripture at the beginning of the lesson, it is clear that Nehemiah practiced self-discipline that involved self-sacrifice during his twelve-year term as governor.

- He did not eat the “bread of the governor” that obviously was his right (verse 14).
- He did not buy land for his personal use that he would have had the right to do (verse 16).
- He provided generously for others, even those who were not of his own people because he was a compassionate leader (verse 17).

Nehemiah kept his focus on the need instead of on himself. He was not “self-centered,” but he was “mission-centered.”

If *you* are the only person that you see in your world,
then your world is very, very small.

Leaders must see the accomplishment of their mission as being more important than they themselves. If they fail in this important aspect, they will face a struggle within themselves each time they face difficulty.

- David was able to face Goliath because he saw the “cause” as being greater than the risks he faced. (See I Samuel 17:29.)
- Esther discovered that her people faced possible annihilation at the hands of the wicked Haman. Mordecai, her uncle, asked her to go unto the king to plead the cause of her people at the risk of death to herself. She responded by saying, “If I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16).
- According to Acts 20:22-24, Paul stated that he was aware of the bonds and afflictions that awaited him at Jerusalem. Yet he was “bound in the spirit” and determined to go, saying, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

Self-sacrifice: Going the Extra Mile

Self-sacrifice – the Price of Success

The price of true leadership is not small. It includes hard work, faithfulness, and self-denial. It is certain that in the role of leadership, time, privacy, and many other aspects of the personal life may be sacrificed. Jesus stated in John 12:24, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” This is a principle of life that is also applicable to leadership.

- Self-sacrifice convinces people of your commitment.
- Self-sacrifice is best taught by example. It must be modeled.

Important characteristics of self-sacrifice in leadership:

- *Servant Spirit:* Jesus taught that “whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” Simply stated, greatness is best obtained through serving others.

As a leader, you should keep this simple statement in mind at all times: “The only thing that you have that those you lead do not have is responsibility.”

- *Selflessness:* This word is not to be confused with that of *selfishness*. Although similar in looks, they are at opposite ends of the spectrum in application. *Selflessness* could be defined as putting what is best for others ahead of what is best for you.
- *Self-discipline:* Discipline is taught and therefore discipline is learned. Discipline is not an inherited characteristic. The human being is a creature of habit. We learn good habits by being taught and by practicing them through self-discipline. Sir Winston Churchill once said, “It is not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what is required.” That is going the extra mile.
- *Right attitude:* Everyone has this thing called attitude. The difference is not everyone has a “right attitude.” Leaders who practice self-sacrifice must at all times guard a right attitude to avoid the trap of bitterness, jealousy, envy, and strife that will tempt them.

- This is especially true of leaders who go the “extra mile.” The attitude of leaders directly affects their self-motivation. Remember, motivation springs from the inside and is not created externally. At times, an adjustment is necessary to this thing called attitude. Someone has said:

The pessimist complains about the wind.
The optimist expects it to change.
The leader adjusts the sails.

- *Flexibility*: A simple principle that pertains to most, if not all building materials, is that anything that does not have a certain amount of flexibility about it will break if it is put under enough pressure. Self-sacrifice has a tendency to put pressure on the life of leaders that otherwise might not have been felt. They must be flexible in their approach and methods of leadership. They must be able at times to change a method in order to continue their advance toward the mark for which they are striving. This does not imply compromising Bible doctrines, which is very different from flexibility of methods.

Success – the Reward of Self-sacrifice

Charles H. Spurgeon, a well-known minister of the nineteenth century, said:

For Him I count as gain each loss,
Disgrace for Him, renown;
Well may I glory in His cross,
While He prepares my crown.

Alexander the Great was without a doubt one of the most successful leaders of all times. Ushered to the throne of Greece at the age of twenty, in twelve short years he led his army in victory after victory until he had conquered his world.

A remarkable thing about this king was that he led his conquering army himself. History records that his men would have wearied had it not been for their zeal for Alexander. It is said that once they were heavily loaded with the spoil that they had taken. Every man had become so rich with garments and wedges of gold that the weight of their treasures slowed them down. The king feared they would not overtake the foe.

Having received a large quantity of the spoil himself, the king burned it all before the eyes of his soldiers and bade them do the same that they might pursue the enemy and win even more spoil. Alexander was heard to say, "Alexander's portion lies beyond." As his soldiers saw the king's own spoils on fire, they were content to give up their gains in hope of receiving even greater rewards in the end. Alexander did himself what he asked others to do. He was a full partaker in the self-denial and hardship he expected of others.

Summary

Some final remarks about leadership and self-sacrifice.

The Bible teaches it. "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

The mission requires it. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Jesus modeled it. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

You, as a leader, have the privilege of practicing it. So often the task is viewed as a requirement or an obligation. In service unto the Lord, we should maintain the attitude that it is a privilege that has been given us to serve Him. Paul said, "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Ephesians 6:7-8).

The reward will prove that it was worth it. Near the end of Paul's fruitful life, he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (II Timothy 4:7-8).

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Define the following terms:

A. self-sacrifice

B. seeing the challenge

C. going beyond the call of duty

D. having a servant spirit

E. possessing flexibility

F. having self-motivation

2. Describe "the extra mile principle." _____

3. What was the motivating factor of Nehemiah's life? _____

4. All great leaders realize that the future of their people depends upon what?

5. Name three examples of self-sacrifice that existed in Nehemiah's life as governor of Jerusalem.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

6. List and describe three examples of people who saw “the cause” as being bigger than themselves.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

7. Write in full John 12:24. Discuss. _____

8. How is greatness attained? _____

9. List five characteristics of self-sacrifice mentioned in this lesson.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

10. What is the reward of self-sacrifice? _____

11. Write a verse in which the Bible teaches self-sacrifice. _____

12. Write a verse of Scripture that teaches our mission requires self-sacrifice.

13. How did Jesus model self-sacrifice? _____

14. What should be the leader's attitude toward self-sacrifice? _____

15. What reward will prove that self-sacrifice is worth the cost? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 16

Follow-through Required

By David L. Flowers

Key Verses

“Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, that I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many. And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house.

“Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded. And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first” (Nehemiah 7:1-5).

Leadership Qualities

Goal setting, faithfulness, endurance, completion of the job, organization, follow-through

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Nehemiah completed the wall in fifty-two days. While that in itself is a remarkable feat, Nehemiah knew he had more to do. He could not simply congratulate himself on a job well done and then leave. He knew making Jerusalem and the Jews strong required more than just building a wall. The absence of a wall was not the problem that had caused the Jews to decline in their power and influence as a nation among nations. The destruction of Jerusalem was a result of other larger problems of a spiritual nature.

The history of the Jewish people reveals they had been disobedient to the laws of God. They had broken their covenant with God. In Deuteronomy 28, Moses challenged the people of Israel with blessings and curses that God would bring upon Israel.

“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come upon thee . . . But . . .if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee . . . The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee” (Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15, 36-37).

In Nehemiah’s first prayer in chapter 1, he had acknowledged the failures of his people’s fathers in keeping the covenant that God had made with them. He repented and confessed the sins of his nation and his people. This prayer poured out of Nehemiah’s heart and put him in the place to begin to do something about the situation of Jerusalem. Now the wall, the first part of the vision, was finished. However, the work was not finished. The vision had not yet been completed.

The Keys to Accomplishment

Nehemiah's vision for Jerusalem began with the building of the wall. To accomplish this, he had divided the work into small segments and assigned the segments to at least thirty-seven working parties. Now, as he turned his attention to other parts of the vision for Jerusalem, he again began to sub-divide the work so that he could accomplish it a little at a time. Leaders must understand how to divide their work into small parts. Then as they work to accomplish each small part, the whole project can be finished.

Some people never do anything for God because they are waiting for everything to be "just right." There probably will never be a time in any leader's life when everything is perfect. Do not wait for the perfect situation. Just go ahead and do what can be done with what is available, where it can be done. Do a little bit every day. This is the means by which big jobs get done.

God Will Add His Blessing

Also, expect the blessing of God upon what is being done. If God calls a leader, the leader can depend on God to work with him in that work. Jesus sent the apostles to preach the gospel to the whole world. He broke it down into small parts: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts. (See Acts 1:8.) However, they did not go alone. "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:20).

A present-day leader can expect the Lord to work with him too. Have faith in God. Believe that the things that look difficult or impossible are possible with God. Commit to doing your part and trust God to do His part. A leader is the workmanship of God.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (I Corinthians 3:9).

When did God ever fail? When has God ever made a mistake? God equips His workmen. He has promised to work with His servants, through His servants, by His servants. What all leaders have to remember is that the battle is the Lord's. Ultimately, leaders are not working solely for themselves. They are servants of the Lord. This is His field. They work in His vineyard. They shepherd His sheep. People of God have entered into the Lord's work. If all of this is true, God is very interested in helping His leaders be successful.

God is very interested in seeing His leaders become successful.

Accomplishment: The Result of Faithfulness

Faithfulness to a vision is always required of a leader who is a servant of God. Paul said, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:2). Why do many leaders quit too soon?

- Perhaps they become discouraged with the circumstances under which they work. Difficulties of the task, the stubbornness of people, or threats from without can combine to discourage a servant of God.
- Perhaps, in their humanity, they become weary. The task can become long and time consuming. It may require a large investment of their time or even their life.
- Perhaps they compare their life of sacrifice with the pleasures of sin, the flesh, and the world.

A part of being faithful is the ability to endure the tests and trials that will come to a leader and his people. It will require much self-discipline for a man of God to be his best for God. He must stay focused on the work God has called him to do. God is looking for a man to make up the hedge and stand in the gap. He needs a watchman on the wall. God wants a man who can stand alone if it is necessary.

Nehemiah's Accomplishments

Nehemiah had accomplished a great deal by building the wall. However, this brought Nehemiah to a crossroads. Was not this the time to quit? No! There was still work to do. The immediate need for a wall had been met. However, the physical need for a wall was only the beginning of that for which Nehemiah had

prayed and believed God. Nehemiah now turned his attention to other needs of the Jews of Jerusalem. He still had many dangers, enemies, and problems to deal with. Nehemiah never lost the vision of what had to be done to meet the need of his people.

Leaders should never aim for less than their best. To stop working when a few things have been accomplished is a failure to follow through. Sometimes this failure to follow through can cause great discouragement for the people. To see only a few needs met when so much needs to be done demands that leadership continues to do its job of leading the people. Follow-through is necessary to reach the point of real victory. Why should leaders be satisfied with a little when they can have it all?

Nehemiah knew that Israel's problem in the beginning was the nation's backsliding. This had brought the displeasure of God upon them. It had caused the nation to be taken captive into Babylon and the city of Jerusalem to be destroyed. Nehemiah knew what had brought the wall down. He also knew what would be required to keep it up. Nehemiah wanted not just the physical wall, but also the spiritual renewal necessary to sustain the people.

Partial Victories

It is very sad when people are tempted to be satisfied with only partial victories. They fail to press on to the place of greater victory.

What are the steps to victory in the lives of leaders? They must see the finished goal before they can divide their work into smaller goals. They may receive their license to preach. Is that the goal? Or perhaps they will become full-time pastors being supported by a church. Is that what they are striving for?

Most preachers are thrilled to reach some of these goals. However, these goals are not what the ministry is about. It is not just getting a few people baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost. It is not just getting enough money to make a living or gain the praise of people. The work of the church is not just getting an instrument, a building, a house, or a plot of land. If leaders stop when they achieve these things, they have had only flesh-centered goals. They have not understood the goals of the church.

Leaders must press on until they get their people to a place where the real issues of the church can be addressed. Those issues are revival, prayer, fasting, the preaching of the Word of God, evangelism, soulwinning, church building, or making disciples out of believers. Leaders who follow through will strive to reproduce themselves so that other leaders can go out into the work of the Lord. This is how the kingdom of God will grow and fill the earth.

Paul said:

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Philippians 3:12-15).

Nehemiah had finished the wall. The enemies of the Jews now knew the work was wrought of God. This accomplishment signaled the defeat of the enemies in one area. However, because of his insight and maturity, Nehemiah knew many pressing needs were still among the people. There were still enemies with more threats, fear tactics, lies, and so forth. Partial victory is not complete victory.

Partial victory is not complete victory.

Jerusalem had an urgent need for spiritual revival. Where should Nehemiah start? Because of the spirit of betrayal that was in some of the chief people, Nehemiah had to make some new appointments to key positions. He began setting a standard of excellence. The workers were organized. He chose only the most faithful men. He delegated responsibilities to those men.

As he worked, God also began to work. God put it into his heart to gather the rulers along with the people so the genealogies of the people could be checked. Nehemiah 7 records the things found concerning the records that existed. Some people were not found recorded in the genealogy of Israel, and they were put out of the priesthood.

God will work to assist His leadership to know the things that need to be done. It is the leader's responsibility to be available to God and willing to let God work through him or her to bring about the victory that He desires to accomplish. Leaders must answer questions such as these:

- Why are they doing what they are doing?
- Where are they leading their people?
- Can they say, with the apostle Paul, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"? (See I Corinthians 11:1.)
- Do they have a plan of action? Are they following that plan?
- Are they working for God or for self?

Summary

Many victories are lost because leaders fail to pursue them. They relax when a partial victory is won. They should finish the work. If they will secure the whole victory by following through with details until the ultimate goal is finished, God will receive the greater glory.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. What kind of problems caused the fall of Jerusalem? _____

2. What reference states what the result of disobedience will be? _____

3. Discuss the prayer of Nehemiah in chapter 1 in light of Deuteronomy 28:1-2.

4. How did Nehemiah start the work of rebuilding Jerusalem? _____

5. What two things must leaders understand about how to accomplish a large task in the work of God?

A. _____

B. _____

6. What is God's promise for those who undertake to do the work of God?

7. Fill in the blanks: "For we are his _____, _____ in Christ Jesus unto _____ which God has before _____ that we should _____ in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

8. Fill in the blanks: "For we are _____ together with God: ye are God's _____, ye are God's _____" (I Corinthians 3:9).

9. Accomplishment is the result of what? _____

10. What is required of stewards? _____

11. Even when the wall was completed, Nehemiah continued pressing on to other issues. Why? _____

12. What are some flesh-oriented goals of a preacher/pastor? _____

13. What are some spiritual goals for which a pastor/leader should strive?

14. Why should leaders not be satisfied with partial victories? _____

15. List some of the points that were a part of Nehemiah's standard of excellence. _____

16. According to the summary, what problems exist when leaders are satisfied with partial victories? _____

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 17

The Importance of the Word of God in a Leader's Life

By David L. Flowers

Key Verse

“And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. . . . And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people...and when he opened it, all the people stood up . . . So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:1, 5, 8).

Leadership Qualities

Humility, hunger for the Word, ability to teach, example of spirituality, faith in God

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Revival is not an accident. It occurs because somebody wants it and pays a price for it. It requires planning and effort on the part of leaders. It also requires a spirit of willingness of the people. It is deliberately worked out from the hearts of people who sincerely desire to hear from God and to do something for God. It is the result of people recognizing an immediate need. It is God's answer to the cry

of His people who commit themselves to attaining God's best for themselves and their families.

Revival is a renewal. It means to restore something that has been lost. For Israel in the days of Nehemiah, it meant restoring the people's commitment to the Old Testament covenant that God had made with that nation under Moses. In the New Testament it means restoring the church to its New Covenant that Jesus Christ made with His church. It means a renewal of obedience to the Word of God. It may include a renewal of the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

"But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:20-24).

The people of Jerusalem, under the leadership of Nehemiah, had accomplished a great deal in a short time. They had completely finished the wall in fifty-two days. All the gates and doors stood in place. It had truly been an engineering marvel. Nehemiah had organized the people into various offices of leadership and work. Some oversaw the city, some were involved as keepers of the doors, and others were appointed to be singers. The Levites served in their functions. Apparently, some attempt at praise and worship had already begun among the people. Nehemiah had purged the priesthood of those who could not prove their genealogy. The people had taken many steps to set things right for the renewing for which Nehemiah was striving. Most important, a unity prevailed among the people that allowed many of these things to be done.

Many enemies were still present. However, they did not hinder the progress being made toward the spiritual revival the leadership of Jerusalem had targeted.

It would be truly wonderful if everyone wanted revival. However, it is not usually the case. It is also true that those who do not want a revival cannot stop those who do want revival. People who want revival can have it. They can also unite with others who are of the same spirit. The more united they are in seeking God for revival, the greater the effect it will have when it comes.

A Request from the People

All the work that Nehemiah had initiated was now reaching its fulfillment. He had led the people through many difficult times. Now the people had arrived at a place in which they made a request to hear the reading of the Word of God.

Spiritual hunger is a wonderful thing if it is directed toward God. One of leaders' most important goals is to instill a hunger for the Word of God within their people. People are going to satisfy their spirits with something. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). God encourages people to direct their spiritual appetites to Him for He is able to satisfy them.

Again, Jesus said:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:7-11).

The psalmist experienced the intensity of this kind of spiritual hunger and thirst. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2).

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isaiah 55:1-2).

Isaiah says this food is without price. God freely gives it. The invitation is open to all to come and partake of the Word of God. It is bread for the soul. It satisfies like a cold drink of water on a hot day. This also implies that spiritual thirst and hunger must be directed toward God. Satan has substitutes he will willingly give. However, they do not satisfy the real longing of the soul. Isaiah says to bring that thirst and hunger to God for He is able to satisfy the soul.

One of the signs that people are experiencing a real revival is that they will hunger for the Word of God. This will become the source of their strength. Without the Word of God there will be no lasting results. Leaders should aim to lead their people into a right spirit and a right relationship with God. Once this has been achieved, the natural thing is for the people to have a hunger for the Word of God.

Someone has said you cannot force people to listen to the Word. This is true in that if the hunger for the Word is not there, leaders cannot force people to hear the Word. It has also been said that a horse can be led to water but he cannot be forced to drink. However, a wiser man said that salt could be put into the horse's oats to create a thirst. The leaders' main objective should be to "put salt in the oats" of their people so they will want to hear the Word of God read, taught, and preached. Leaders should do whatever they can to stimulate their people's hunger for the Word of God.

Honoring the Word of God

At the request of the people of Jerusalem, the law of God was brought so that it could be read in their hearing. (See Nehemiah 8.) Notice several things about what happened during this time.

- Who read the Law? Ezra the priest read the law of God. This priest was the anointed of the Lord. It is important that those who preach the Word have the anointing of God upon their lives. They must be able to teach. They must prepare themselves before they can prepare others. They must have God's approval before they can teach. They should be knowledgeable and holy. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).
- The Word was read from morning until midday (verses 2-3). This reading occurred on the first day of the seventh month. This was the beginning of

the Feast of Trumpets that probably was the occasion of their gathering. Apparently several hours were given to the reading of the Law.

- The people were attentive (verse 3). Motivated by their hunger for spiritual things, they carefully listened to what the Law said.
- The people were reverent and respectful (verse 5). They stood during the reading of the Law.
- The reading of the Word caused the people to humble themselves and worship God (verse 6). They lifted their hands, bowed their heads, and worshiped with their faces to the ground. Their response indicated the humility they felt as the Word of God began to affect their lives.
- The people were made to understand the Law (verses 7-8). Teaching and instruction must accompany the reading of the Word of God. In both the Old and New Testaments, teachers have always been employed to make sure that God's Word is clearly understood.

The reading of the Word of God affected the people as they heard it. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). They began to see themselves as the Word was read and explained. They saw their shortcomings and failures. They saw their weaknesses. They believed what the Word of God had to say. They knew they had to do something about what they had been hearing. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Obedience to the Word

The purpose of this lesson is to point out the attitude of the people when they heard the reading of the Word. While it would be interesting to delve into all the details of the Jewish laws and so forth, the important thing is to see the effect of God's Word upon the people as they realized they were not keeping the things written in the Law.

It is one thing to be the people of God and quite another to be the obedient children of God. As the Law was read and the teaching concerning it was given, the people began to weep and mourn. Conviction gripped their hearts and repentance was the result. However, Nehemiah stopped the people from their crying and mourning. Why? This was a day for rejoicing and happiness. The Feast of Trumpets was not a time for the people to afflict themselves and weep.

What was Nehemiah doing? He was demanding obedience to the Word of God. While he understood the repentance that had come to the people's hearts when they heard the Word, he knew that real repentance would lead them to obedience. Obedience in this case was fulfilled in keeping the Feast of Trumpets with joy and rejoicing. Why?

"For the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

As the people continued to read the Word of God, their understanding grew. With that their ability to obey God grew also. As they obeyed God, joy began to fill their hearts. (See verses 13-18.)

Summary

This lesson points out the importance of spiritual leaders with faith who are humble enough simply to obey the Word of God. The leaders' role is to bring their people to a place where God's Word becomes important to their people. They must strive to instill within them a hunger for the Word of God. They must be able to teach so that the people gain the proper understanding of the Word of God.

God will begin to work in the lives of the people as the leaders do their part. God will bring conviction to them, and with that will come repentance. Humility and faith will also begin to be apparent in the lives of the people. They will believe what God has said, and they will humble themselves to do it. This kind of faith and obedience has always been blessed of God.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Why is revival not an accident? _____

2. What is meant by the statement that revival is a renewal? _____

3. Define the following:

A. Humility

B. Hunger for the Word of God

C. Ability to teach

D. Example of spirituality

E. Faith in God

4. Why must spiritual hunger be directed toward God? _____

5. What did Jesus say we must hunger and thirst for? If we do, what will be the result? _____

6. What is the price of spiritual food according to the prophet Isaiah? _____

7. What is one sign of true revival? _____

8. When people do not seem to be spiritually thirsty, how can a leader create spiritual thirst? _____

9. Write one verse of Scripture that explains why the Word of God has a serious impact upon people. _____

10. Write one verse of Scripture that explains why the reading of the Word of God is important in terms of faith. _____

11. Why did the people begin to weep and mourn when the Word of God was read? _____

12. What was the result of the conviction the people felt? _____

13. Why did Nehemiah demand that the people stop weeping and mourning after they had heard the Word of God read? _____

14. What is the secret of the strength of a child of God? _____

Lesson 18

Repentance: A Fruit of Spiritual Leadership

By David L. Flowers

Key Verse

“Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God” (Nehemiah 9:1-3).

Leadership Qualities

Spirituality, a walk with God, ability to influence other people, identification with the people

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

The inevitable result of revival is repentance. Or perhaps some people will say that revival is a result of repentance. Whatever the order of events may be, when people begin to seek God, almost always the first fruit manifested is repentance. When people come into the presence of God, it is a most natural thing to become

aware of things in their lives that do not please God. Repentance is then the natural result. Spiritual leadership will almost always lead people to repentance.

Repentance: A Definition

Webster's Dictionary defines the word *repent* as follows: "To grieve for sins committed or for things sinfully left undone . . . to feel extreme regret for what one has done or forgotten or omitted to do." *Repentance* is defined as "a feeling of contrition or act of penance for sins committed."

While the dictionary indicates the feeling or desire to repent or that results from repentance, the Bible actually goes further than that with its definition of repentance. W. E. Vine says that repentance "signifies to change one's mind or purpose, always, in the N. T., involving a change for the better." Hence, the term *repentance*, as used in the Bible, means to turn from sin to follow God and His Word. It is more than desire. It includes a determination to change to a life of obedience to God.

Ephesians 5 contains several admonitions concerning living for God.

- "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2).
- "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8).
- "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

In the verses following each of the above, Paul listed many things that should not be a part of the life of a child of God; yet they had been a part of this person's life before. The list includes fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, drunkenness, and so forth. While doing these things, the spiritual state of that person is described as "darkness."

Then Paul began listing things that should be done. These include proving what is acceptable unto the Lord, redeeming the time, and understanding what the will of the Lord is. What makes the difference? God sends the light, faith enters, and repentance is born within the heart.

“For ye were sometimes darkness. . . . Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. . . . But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Ephesians 5:8, 11, 13-14).

It is when one awakes from sleep and arises from the dead that light has come. Repentance causes the change that results from this new spiritual awakening.

Repentance: A Response to the Word of God

The story of Nehemiah has now reached a point where the people have begun to have a spiritual awakening. The Word of God was bearing fruit within their lives. Please understand this is Old Testament experience. These people did not know God in the new birth experience as described in the New Testament. They were seeking God under the Old Covenant given by Moses. However, the fruit of repentance was much the same then as now.

Nehemiah 8 records the story of the feast at which the Word of God had been read. The Word of God was working in their lives during that time to bring them to repentance.

Nehemiah 9 records the continuation of the experience of the people as the Word of God bore fruit in their lives. Notice the following:

1. *Separation from strangers: This signifies the desire to be pure before God. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul taught separation from unclean things:*

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;

and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

2. *The people stood.* This signified a reverence for God and His Word. In the New Testament, God's people are admonished as follows: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29).
3. *The people confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.* This is in keeping with the Old Testament covenant whereby the sins of the fathers were visited on the children until the third and fourth generation in addition to the sins of the people themselves. However, the New Testament teaches that saints should confess their sins to God and to one another. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).
4. *The leaders and the people continued reading in the Word of God for three hours.* They then confessed their sins and worshiped God for three hours. Hunger for the Word, genuine soul-searching, and true worship are the characteristics of a truly repentant soul. In this attitude it is easy to be aware of how worthy God is to be worshiped and how unworthy an individual is.

The Prayer of Repentance

Repentance can occur on an individual level, a church level, or a national level. However, for it to occur on a church or national level, a leader is usually involved along with enough people to affect the rest of the church or national body. Even on an individual level, the Holy Ghost usually uses a leader to lead that person to repentance.

Nehemiah prayed a prayer of repentance for the nation in Nehemiah 1 when God first began moving on him. This spirit had moved him to be the leader

of the people. This same spirit inspired the people to work together. Now, it was bringing them to a place of spiritual renewal before God.

The people, in Nehemiah 9, began to pray a prayer of national repentance. The leaders identified with their people. Many elements of genuine repentance are present in this prayer.

- God is exalted in a prayer of repentance. He alone is worthy to be worshiped (verse 5).
- He is worthy because of who He is and what He has done. He is worthy to be worshiped by all the inhabitants of earth and Heaven. This is the true foundation of repentance: the greatness of God and the unworthiness of the sinner (verses 6-15).
- This is followed by their confession of sins they and their fathers have committed (verses 16-17, 26, 28-30, 35).
- They then thankfully acknowledge the mercy of God that has already been extended in that He was longsuffering to their fathers and to them (verses 17-25, 31).
- The justness of God's judgments is then expressed (verses 26-30).
- A desire and a commitment to obey the Word of God expresses their repentance (Nehemiah 9:38; 10:28-29).
- Their commitment includes purity of life and separation from the heathens around them (Nehemiah 10:30-31), a pledge to pay their tithes and offerings to support the ministry (Nehemiah 10:32-39), and a willingness to respond to the need of the city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11: 1-2).

Repentance and the Holy Ghost

During the time of Nehemiah, the people were commanded to do things that they could not do. The commandments depended upon them and their own ability in the flesh to be fulfilled. The people of the Old Testament constantly failed because of unbelief and the lack of strength in the flesh. They could not please God because they did not have help from God that they needed.

In the New Testament, God has changed His relationship with humanity. Saints in the New Testament are not commanded to do that which cannot be done, as were these people under the Law. Saints in the New Testament have been given the gift of the Holy Ghost. He is our helper. W. E. Vine says that the

word *comforter*, when applied to the Holy Ghost, means “called to one’s side . . . to one’s aid.”

The Holy Ghost moves on the heart of a sinner when the Word of God is preached. He convicts of sin. Jesus said, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me” (John 16:7-9).

This conviction of the Holy Ghost within a sinner’s heart will lead that person to repentance. The Holy Ghost leads a person to be born again: repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost leads God’s people to know how to respond to the needs of the world.

Repentance must be maintained in the lives of the saints at all times. It is not something that occurs once and is then forgotten. It leads the child of God into a lifestyle that is acceptable to God. The same Spirit that leads people to confess sins will also lead them to live a life pleasing to God. Repentance then becomes the foundation for a holy life. Holiness is the fruit of the new birth that includes repentance.

The Origins of Repentance

Repentance is the result of the conviction produced in the heart of individuals when the Holy Ghost moves upon them. The Holy Ghost will move upon a person as a result of several things.

The anointed preaching of the Word of God will produce conviction. The Holy Ghost will speak to the heart of a person as they listen to a man of God preach the Word.

God can speak to individuals because they have seen the godly example lived before them by God’s people.

Perhaps a godly person witnessed to someone, and the Holy Ghost used that witness to talk to the heart of that individual.

Intercessory prayer of a faithful saint of God may lead others to repentance. Perhaps it was a parent, a spouse, or a friend that prayed. The Holy Ghost used the medium of those prayers to bring conviction to the heart of a person who may not even know that he or she is the subject of those prayers.

In almost all cases, God uses some leader to bring about the repentance that is needed in an individual's life, the church, or the nation. God uses people to minister to people.

Summary

Repentance is a desire to be right with God. It is a willingness to do whatever God requires. One of the most important fruits of spiritual leadership is the repentance that is caused in the lives of the people who follow that leader.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Spiritual leadership will almost always produce what result? _____

2. Write the New Testament definition of *repentance*. _____

3. What works does Paul include when he describes someone who is in darkness? _____

4. Describe New Testament separation as it is discussed in II Corinthians 6:14-18. _____

5. List the four things the people did as a part of their repentance and describe the significance of each.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

6. What is the primary difference between Old Testament people and New Testament people when it comes to living for God? _____

7. How often must a person repent? _____

8. List at least four things that produce repentance.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

Lesson 19

Leadership and Fellowship

By David L. Flowers

Key Scriptures

“On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude” (Nehemiah 13:1-3).

Leadership Qualities

Example to his followers, ability to teach, separation from the world

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Introduction

At various times in the Book of Nehemiah, the subject of separation, thus the subject of fellowship, has emerged. This emphasizes the importance of right fellowship as well as right separation.

In chapter 2, before the building of the wall had begun, the people had joined together in a fellowship centered on the building of the wall. A common purpose brought them together. However, Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian were told they had “no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:20).

Again in chapter 6, Nehemiah had to take a stand when these same enemies tried to create a climate of compromise. They asked Nehemiah to come down into one of the villages in the plain of Ono to discuss this work. Nehemiah perceived that their desire was to stop the work. He was not willing to discuss or consider anything that would stop, slow down, or hinder the building of the wall. Thus he rejected their appeal. Compromise was not an option when it came to the primary work that God had called Nehemiah to do.

In Nehemiah 9, during the spiritual renewal that was occurring in the nation, the Israelites separated themselves from all of the “strangers.” These were people whose genealogy was not available. They could not prove they were Israelites or proselytes. Thus, they could not prove they were a part of the covenant God made with Israel. The business of repentance and spiritual revival the people had begun demanded that only those who were a part of that covenant should be involved.

Basically the same thing happened in Nehemiah 13 in the ongoing spiritual revival of the nation.

In each of the above cases, the act of separation was necessary for the work to be conducted. Without this separation, the enemies would have hindered Nehemiah’s work. God had given a responsibility to Nehemiah. Separation was required to accomplish the work.

Separation and Fellowship

When Nehemiah separated himself and his people from the others, he was also defining the lines of fellowship for those who would be involved in the work. This fellowship was a vital part of the work of building the wall. These people were dependent upon one another for their accomplishments, their defense, and provision for their needs. They could not risk allowing someone to come in among them, destroy their unity, and hinder their purpose.

The New Testament speaks of separation and fellowship. In Ephesians 5:7, 11, Paul said, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them. . . . Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Christians can have no fellowship with sins committed by the people of this world. These sins will keep a person from going to Heaven. Ephesians 5 names many of these things.

The apostle John declared the following concerning our fellowship:

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. . . . If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:3, 6-7).

Notice the following from these verses:

- The fellowship of God's people begins with their fellowship with God. God's people cannot have true fellowship with one another until they first have fellowship with God.
- They cannot fellowship with God and do the works of darkness. This is somewhat the same as Paul said in Ephesians 5.
- If someone says they have fellowship with God and still do the works of darkness, they are lying, and they are not living according to truth. They do not have the fellowship about which John is talking.
- If they walk in the light, then they do have fellowship with one another. They do not have to create this fellowship. It is a result of their relationship with God.
- They also are experiencing continuous cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Again Paul said:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will

dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:1).

Go back and read again each of the questions in verses 14-16. Think about the contrasts pointed out in each question. Paul said that God will dwell in a person only if certain criteria are met. Children of God must come out from among certain aspects of the world if God is going to be their God. The Lord Almighty desires to be our Father. He has made a tremendous sacrifice to create this relationship. However, the relationship also depends upon us cleansing ourselves from things that He has rejected.

A Leader's Challenge

Leaders must first of all be examples of the kind of life that children of God should live. In I Peter 5:3, the apostle explained that elders or leaders must be an example to their followers. They must be examples in their prayer life as well as fasting. They should spend time reading the Word of God. They should lead their people by their example in worship and soulwinning. They must be examples of holy living. One of the leaders' most powerful tools is the life they live. Their people are admonished, in Hebrews 13:7, to follow their "faith." By being an example of these things, they can teach their people how to live in this world but not be overcome by it.

Leaders must understand separation and fellowship if they are to teach their people.

The people of God live in this world, but they are not of this world. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (I John 3:1-2). The world does not "know" the children of God. It does not perceive who the children of God are.

The verb *to know* has many meanings, such as:

- To be aware of
- To feel
- To perceive
- To be sure of
- To understand

While the world does not know the people of God, it is just as true that the people of God must understand how to live in this world. They must know how to relate to this present world in which they live.

Living in This Present World

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

God’s grace saves, but it does much more than that. Grace is a teacher that instructs the people of God how to live in this present world. Saints are in the world but not of the world. So how does a saint of God relate to the world and its people?

Four Levels of Association

- Acquaintance
- Friendship
- Fellowship
- Intimacy

Acquaintance

Acquaintances are people you know on a very casual basis. Probably you would speak to them only occasionally: perhaps at the restaurant, grocery store, or while shopping. You may or may not know this person’s name. However, you do see them from time to time, and you may stop to speak to them casually. You might talk with them about the weather or the general events around your

community. You do not have much in common between you. They may be good neighbors, and you know who they are. However, you never really do know much about them nor do they know much about you. This is not fellowship.

Friendship

Friendship has to do with people we see more often. We may share some activities together such as school events or some kind of community project. You may have some things in common with them such as children the same age, a hobby, or a job. This level of association is limited to only a few activities that you share together. They are things you mutually enjoy or share only at certain times. Probably you do not see them much at any time other than when you share these common activities. These activities do not require a great amount of time or commitment. This is not fellowship.

Fellowship

The people with whom you fellowship are likely to be people you see very often. You see them frequently because you share many of the same values, activities, goals, lifestyle, and so forth. You will find that you spend a good deal of time with these people. You will probably find that these are people you depend upon for support and understanding as you live your life. You probably look to them for some approval. You work together, play together, and share much of your life together with them.

The people of the world have fellowship based on clubs, sports, or other such centers of activity. As children of God, your fellowship centers around the church because that is where the people are who have many of the same goals that you have. In the church are people who share the same life values that you have. They agree as to what is right and wrong. Similar lifestyles are shared. This closeness comes as saints worship God and work together for the kingdom of God.

Intimacy

A level deeper than fellowship and is called intimacy. This is the closest association that someone can have. Usually, this is shared with no more than one or two people in your lifetime. In this level of association, you will share your innermost thoughts, feelings, and desires. This is a point where the goals of the two people are identical. They share everything in life together. Marriage is one

example of this. The closeness of David and Jonathan would also be an example of intimacy.

It is very important that leaders understand these levels of association so they can guide their people. They will be able to see when one of their followers may be developing a closeness that is not healthy. Not all associations are evil. Leaders are responsible to know how to assist their people when they need their help.

Sometimes young Christians do not understand the nature of friendship and fellowship. The truth is we generally will become what we fellowship, because fellowship is a sharing of life, values, goals, and so forth. Young Christians will naturally be influenced by the people around them—especially those they look up to. Leaders must be conscious of their people’s needs for the right kind of associations so their lives can be fulfilling. Leaders are in the unique position of being able to influence their followers as to whom they will fellowship. Leaders must use this ability in the fear of God.

Summary

People generally will become like the people with whom they fellowship. The church is a center that can provide for many of the needs of people’s lives especially in the area of fellowship. Leaders must be aware of the need for fellowship within their people. Pastors and other leaders must be able to help their people find the right kinds of fellowship.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Discuss the manner in which leaders must be examples in light of this lesson. _____

2. What is meant by the phrase “ability to teach” in light of this lesson?

3. What is meant by “separation from the world”? _____

4. Discuss the relationship between separation and fellowship as it is portrayed in this lesson. _____

5. Why did Nehemiah refuse to compromise with those who wanted him to meet them to discuss the work? _____

6. List four examples of separation as it was practiced by Nehemiah and Israel during the time of the construction of the wall.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

7. Why were separation and fellowship important issues in the construction of the wall? _____

8. According to Ephesians 5: 7, 11, what is the New Testament teaching concerning our relationship with the works of darkness? _____

9. According to I John 1, where does the fellowship of God's people begin?

10. If a child of God claims to have fellowship with God but he walks in darkness, what is his true situation? _____

11. How does someone know a person is having fellowship with God?

12. Discuss separation and fellowship as Paul taught in II Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:1. _____

13. According to Titus 2:11-18, what does the grace of God teach us concerning living in this present world? _____

14. List and describe the four levels of association.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

15. According to the summary why is fellowship such an important life issue?

Lesson 20

The Zeal of a Leader

By James A. Crumpacker

Key Verses

“And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God . . . And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. . . . And I made treasurers over the treasuries. . . . Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof” (Nehemiah 13:7-13).

Leadership Qualities

Zeal for the work of God, compassion

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

If one is to be a spiritual leader, he must have within him being an enthusiasm for helping people to know God. He must have zeal. *Zeal* is defined

in the dictionary as “eagerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something. Fervor. Passion.”

This zeal or desire to work for the kingdom of God will not come by accident or from the lost we are seeking to win to God. It cannot be given to the leader by organizational leaders. It will not come by election or promotion to an office or position. Zeal comes from the leader’s relationship with God and the call of God to His service.

Zeal Equals Enthusiastic Desire

In reading God’s book about the men who led His people in days past, it is easily seen that they *always* had to overcome hindrances to their progress. Zeal is more than casually thinking about doing something. It is more than a fleeting want or desire. Zeal is an enthusiastic desire. It does not die when obstacles come between the leader and his goal. Zeal will never go away because the Lord Himself has placed it there. Real leaders will find a way to accomplish what God has placed upon their heart to do because they have a zeal for the task that will not die. It is like a consuming fire that devours them.

“For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (Psalm 69:9a).

Nehemiah’s Zeal

Nehemiah, as cupbearer to the king of Persia, had a good life for himself and his family. They lacked nothing in their daily living. He could have been very satisfied with this life. God in His wisdom, however, placed upon Nehemiah’s heart the desire to see all of the Jews in Jerusalem live a more comfortable and safer life. He received favor with the king and was given permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. With much opposition Nehemiah did this.

While he was in Jerusalem, he used his authority and leadership skills to build the wall of the city and to restore Temple worship. He encouraged the people to give of their tithes and offerings so that the priests and Levites could do their jobs. When all of this was accomplished, he returned to his job with King

Artaxerxes. This is what he had promised the king when he received permission to go to Jerusalem the first time. (See Nehemiah 2:6.)

According to Nehemiah 2:1, Nehemiah's first journey to Jerusalem was in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes. His second journey was twelve years later in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes. (See Nehemiah 13:6.) During these twelve years, Nehemiah continued to hear reports of how the people were living in Israel. The reports were not encouraging.

A struggle began in Nehemiah's heart. He had tried so hard to raise the living standard and bring revival to his people. The struggle probably went something like this: "You have done your part. If these people cannot continue to do right it is not your problem now. Do not worry about them. It is time you took care of yourself and your own family. Remember how difficult the journey was?" (It was about five hundred miles from Babylon to Jerusalem. In those days this was a very long journey taking thirty to forty-five days.) His thinking continued, "Nehemiah, you are older now. Do not worry about those people. You are not responsible for them."

No matter how hard he talked to himself, he could not talk himself out of making another journey to Jerusalem to help his people. He had such a burning desire. He had great zeal for those people. He requested and received permission from the king to return to Jerusalem. Then he started his journey.

Zeal Means Caring

Do you care for the welfare of others so much that you inconvenience yourself for them? Will you go without so that those who do not know your God will have a chance to know Him? Have you ever lost sleep over a problem that was trying to destroy your people? If you can answer yes to these questions you have the makings of a spiritual leader.

A Leader's Lack of Zeal for Truth and Righteousness

Eliashib, the high priest, was a man of authority. His position gave him the leadership of the Temple. Sometime after Nehemiah had departed from Jerusalem the first time, Eliashib invited Tobiah to have a room within the courts of the Temple. (See Nehemiah 13:5.) Remember that Tobiah was an

enemy of the Jews. He had been responsible for much of the opposition that Nehemiah and the people experienced during the building of the wall of Jerusalem. He was the servant of Sanballat. (See Nehemiah 2:19; 4:3; 6:19.) Why did the high priest give him a room in the Temple where the offerings of the people were supposed to be stored?

Some leaders, like Nehemiah, have a zeal for what is right. Other leaders, like Eliashib, have a strong desire to have unity with everyone at any price. They have no zeal for truth. They cannot stand against sin and unrighteousness. They shy away from confrontation and problems. They do not want to take a stand and say what is right and what is wrong. They lack the courage to stand for what is right. Unity is not unity if we must compromise truth and righteousness to have it. Eliashib wanted peace and no confrontations. He did not have a zeal for truth. He did not take a stand for that which would be profitable for his people.

What burns in your heart? What do you have zeal for? Is it for personal gain? Is it to be popular or highly respected by all? Is it for position or power? Is it to have a great following of people at any price? Or is it for people to come closer to God? Oh, that there could be a zeal of the Lord in our hearts to do His will!

Eliashib's leadership had brought peace between the Jews and Tobiah. But what was the price for that peace? The lack of zeal for the truth and righteousness comes with a price.

A Lack of Zeal Hinders Worship and Obedience

According to Nehemiah 13, the worship at the Temple was not going on well. The tithes were not being collected. The priests and Levites were not doing their jobs because they were not being compensated correctly. Much work and business was being done on the Sabbath.

Also, the people were getting married to foreigners. Eliashib's lack of zeal for truth, righteousness, and the Word of God had relieved the pressure of persecution from Sanballat and Tobiah. But his lack of zeal had created so many more problems. He was not leading his people closer to God. In fact, they were getting farther away from God every day.

Zeal Means Getting Tough

Not many godly leaders enjoy being as tough as Nehemiah had to get. In fact, zeal is not about enjoyment. It is about doing what has to be done to get God's work done. Nehemiah faced this very challenge. Nehemiah 13:23-25 and 28 says:

"In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. . . . And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me."

Some might think Nehemiah got mean with his administration. The zeal of the Lord for the righteousness of God caused him to take drastic actions. He left no doubt in the people's minds what he stood for. He had a zeal for pleasing God. What men thought of him was not important to him. He knew what God thought about the way the Jews were living. He acknowledged that as being more important than what the people thought about him. Consider the following verses of Scriptures:

"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Psalm 69:9a).

"My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words" (Psalm 119:139).

Nehemiah openly demonstrated his zeal before his followers. All could see his zeal and judge his motives for themselves. Some were grateful. Others hated it.

Consider these questions: How do you demonstrate your zeal for the goals that your people and you have? How do you show your people that you really believe in what you are trying to accomplish together?

Nehemiah made it very clear as to what was right or what was wrong, what was acceptable and what was not. He was very clear on how a person should live to please the Lord or what should not be done.

All of God's people want the blessing of the Lord. However, to have that blessing, you must live according to His teachings. In Titus 2:14-15, Paul said, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

Leaders must ask themselves, "Is my zeal for my people and their welfare; or is it for my own welfare?" Do you have the zeal for God and your people that will make you take drastic action like Nehemiah did? Do you love truth and the Word of God enough to take a stand for it?

Summary

Let us pray that God will give us a zeal for righteousness and truth like Nehemiah had. We must pray to be baptized with the love of Christ. If we can have this kind of love and zeal, we will see the lost come to God by the millions.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Define *zeal*. _____

2. Define *compassion*. _____

3. Where does zeal come from? _____

4. How does Nehemiah's commitment to Jerusalem illustrate the spirit of Psalm 69:9a? _____

5. What did Nehemiah do after the events of Nehemiah 1-12? _____

6. How many years elapsed between chapters 12 and 13 of Nehemiah?

7. What does zeal equal? _____

8. What does zeal mean in a practical sense? _____

9. According to Nehemiah 13, Eliashib had been made the high priest. How did he fail in his leadership? _____

10. How did a lack of zeal hinder worship and obedience? _____

11. Nehemiah reacted to the intermarriages of the people with the heathen around them. What did he do and how is this a sign of zeal? _____

12. How does Titus 2:14-15 describe the zeal of a New Testament believer?

Lesson 21

Integrity: The Source of Faithfulness

By David L. Flowers

Key Verses

“After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed. I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do” (Nehemiah 7:1-2, NIV).

“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved” (Psalm 15:1-5).

Leadership Qualities

Integrity, faithfulness, fear of God

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

The New Webster's Dictionary defines *integrity* as “moral soundness, probity (scrupulous honesty).”

In the Old Testament, the word *integrity* originates from the words *tom* or *tummah*. These words carry the idea of “simplicity, soundness, completeness and are rendered also as uprightness or perfection.”

This word is translated as “integrity” in the following verses of the Old Testament: Genesis 20:5-6; I Kings 9:4; Ps 7:8; 25:21; 26:1, 11; 41:12; 78:72; Proverbs 19:1; 20:7. In all of these places it seems to carry the meaning of simplicity, or sincerity of heart, and intention; truthfulness, uprightness.

In the plural “tummin” it is one of the words on the breastplate of the High Priest (Exodus 28:30; Deuteronomy 33:8; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65) on one of the sacred lots (Urim and Thummim).

The word “integrity” does not occur in the New Testament but its equivalent may be seen in “sincerity,” “truth,” the “pure heart,” “the single eye,” etc. In the above sense of simplicity of intention it is equivalent to being honest, sincere, genuine and is fundamental to true character (W. L. Walker).

The Need for Integrity

In the *New International Version*, Nehemiah 7:2 uses the word *integrity* to replace the word *faithful* found in the *King James Version*. Thus, an immediate connection is seen between *faithfulness* and *integrity*. A connection is also established between integrity and the fear of God.

Even though the word *integrity* is not found in the Book of Jeremiah in KJV, it is illustrated many times. In the verses found at the beginning of this lesson, Nehemiah needed someone he could trust to take charge of the city of Jerusalem. After working so hard to build the walls, set the gates, remove the rubble, and so forth, he was not about to turn the city over to someone who could not be trusted. He had proven his love for this city for which he had sacrificed so much. To whom could he turn?

Integrity is the foundation of trust and therefore the basis for lasting human relationships. To build trust, a person must demonstrate integrity in what he says and does. Integrity also implies the ability to assume responsibility. A person of integrity will not fail to fulfill known responsibilities.

The Scriptures say that Nehemiah chose Hanani, his brother, and Hananiah, the keeper of the citadel. Why? Nehemiah knew his brother was a man of integrity. That kind of trust grows through the years in the close relationship that brothers have.

Hananiah was not a brother. He was the keeper of the citadel. The NIV says he was chosen because he was a man of integrity, and he feared God more than most men do. The KJV says he was a faithful man and feared God above many.

From this verse of Scripture, a connection is established between integrity and the two qualities mentioned herein: trust and the fear of God.

Whom do you choose to trust when you have a matter of importance to handle? For example: Would a person ever trust a thief with money? Could a person trust someone who is morally questionable with care of his family? The answer to each of these questions is a rhetorical, "Of course not." No one in his right mind would ever do such a thing. Integrity is especially important when a person is looking for someone he can trust when a matter of importance is at issue.

Nehemiah's Integrity

Even though the word *integrity* is not used about him, Nehemiah was a man of integrity. This is seen throughout the book in the following passages:

- In Nehemiah 2, the king trusted Nehemiah to build the walls and even gave letters of access to the materials that were owned by the king.
- In Nehemiah 2:20, it took integrity for Nehemiah to make the separation between those who could and could not work on the walls. This required honesty, courage, and character.
- In Nehemiah 5:9-13, Nehemiah was able to use his servants and himself as examples of those who did not oppress their fellow Jews. They did not

even take the money and privileges that were their right because of the need of the people.

- In Nehemiah 5:14-19, Nehemiah further illustrated his integrity by his personal self-sacrifice in doing the work of God.
- In Nehemiah 6:1-4, the integrity of Nehemiah demanded that he continue with the work when the pressure was on to compromise with the enemies of God.
- In Nehemiah 6:10-14, Nehemiah refused to enter the Temple for his personal protection even at the suggestion of his friends.

Integrity in Practice

In practice, integrity is an internal governor that speaks when a person is about to make a decision. It always bases its judgments upon what it knows to be righteous.

Psalm 15:2-5 is a description of those who will dwell with the Lord in His holy hill. It is also a good description of integrity.

- To “walk uprightly” is to behave in a righteous fashion. “The word here rendered ‘uprightly,’ or, in the Hebrew, ‘perfectly,’ means that which is complete in all its parts; where no part is missing or is defective” (*biblehub.com/commentaries/psalms/15-2.htm, accessed October 20, 2013*).
- To “work righteousness” simply means to do right.
- To “speak the truth in his heart” means, “He uses language that is sincere, and that is in accordance with his real belief. This is opposed to all mere outward professions, and all hypocritical pretenses. His religion has its seat in the heart, and is not the religion of forms; his acts are the expressions of upright intentions and purposes, and are not performed for selfish and hypocritical ends” (*bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/14090/eVerseID/14090/RTD/barnes, accessed October 20, 2013*).
- In the phrase “he that backbiteth not with his tongue,” “the word ‘backbite’ means to censure; slander; reproach; speak evil of . . . the idea is,

that one should 'not' be a slanderer, or should 'not' circulate evil reports in regard to others."

- "Nor doeth evil to his neighbour" should be interpreted, "That does his neighbor no harm." This refers to injury in any way, whether by word or deed. The idea is that the man who will be admitted to dwell on the holy hill of Zion, the man who is truly religious, is one who does no injury to anyone; who always does that which is right to others. The word *neighbor* usually refers to one who resides near us; and it also denotes all persons who are near to us in the sense that we have business relations with them; all persons with whom we have anything to do. It is used in this sense here as referring to our dealings with other persons.
- The words "*nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour*" mean "he is slow to believe evil of another. He does not grasp at it greedily as if he had pleasure in it. He does not himself originate such a reproach, nor does he readily and cheerfully credit it when it is stated by others . . . and does all that can be done consistently with truth to check such reports, and to secure to every man a good name."
- "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned" expresses the other side of the previous point.
 - He does not show respect to a man of base or bad character on account of his wealth, his position, or his rank in life. He estimates character as it is in itself, and not as derived from rank, relationship, or station. While, as stated in the previous verse, he is not disposed to take up a false or evil report against another, he is at the same time disposed to do justice to all, and does not honor those who do not deserve to be honored, or apologize for base conduct because it is committed by one of exalted station or rank. Loving virtue and piety for their own sake, he hates all that is opposite; and where conduct deserves reprobation, no matter where found, he does not hesitate to avow his conviction in regard to it (biblehub.com/commentaries/psalms/15-4.htm, accessed October 20, 2013).
- Psalm 15:4b, "He honoureth them that fear the LORD." No matter in what rank or condition of life they may be found. Where there is true piety he

honors it. He is willing to be known as one that honors it, and is willing to bear all the reproach that may be connected with such a deeply cherished respect, and with such an avowal.

- Psalm 15:4c, “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” A man of integrity cannot do a wrong thing. If he has pledged to do a certain thing and finds that it is wrong or will bring about evil, he will not do it. However, if he has pledged to do something and finds out that it will be to his disadvantage, he will go ahead and do what he said regardless of the consequences to himself.
- Psalm 15:5, “He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.” These ideas have to do with financial honesty and integrity. A man of integrity will not abuse people financially. He also will not pervert justice by taking or giving a bribe.

This man will abide in the Tabernacle of the LORD and he will dwell in the holy hill of God. Further, he will never be moved. Psalm 15:5 is saying,

“He shall have a solid foundation of hope; he is a friend of God, and shall enjoy his favor forever. In other words, these things constitute true religion; and he who has such a character will obtain eternal life. His foundation is sure; he will be safe in all the storms of life, and safe when the cold waves of death beat around him.”

Summary

Integrity is the basis of trust. A person with integrity will be judged as being faithful. This kind of person will fulfill responsibility regardless of the cost. It is therefore the cement that creates and maintains lasting relationships between people. It is also the basis upon which God will judge a man's worthiness to dwell with Him in His holy hill.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Discuss the Hebrew root words for the word *integrity*. _____

2. The word *integrity* that is used in the NIV replaces what word that was used in the KJV? _____

3. How does *Webster's Dictionary* define *integrity*? _____

4. What are the New Testament words that carry the same meaning as *integrity*? _____

5. By comparing translations, a connection is established between what two words? _____

6. Integrity becomes the foundation for what? It further implies the ability to assume what? _____

7. Who were Hanani and Hananiah and why were they chosen to oversee the city of Jerusalem? _____

8. A person of integrity will not fail to do what? _____

9. When is integrity especially important? _____

10. Integrity bases its judgments upon what? _____

11. Give short (two or three words) definitions of the following terms:

A. Walk uprightly

B. Work righteousness

C. Speak truth in the heart

D. Backbite not with his tongue

E. Nor doeth evil to his neighbor

F. Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor

G. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned

H. To honour them who fear the LORD.

I. To swear to your own hurt and change not.

J. Usury

K. Take reward against the innocent.

12. How do we know that Nehemiah was a man of integrity? _____

13. In practice, integrity is a _____ who speaks when a person is about to make a decision.

14. Briefly summarize the meaning of Psalm 15. _____

15. Briefly summarize the lesson. _____

16. Briefly summarize the following:

- A. Integrity

- B. Fear of God (as it has to do with integrity)

- C. Faithfulness

Missionary Spotlight Samuel and Joyce Latta

By Sam Latta
Written September 9, 2011



The Sam Latta Family c. 1977

Samuel Lee Latta was born August 25, 1936. He just turned seventy-five years old and has been married fifty-six years. He is the father of four children, eight grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. He started preaching when he was fifteen years old. He has been active in the ministry for sixty years. He is a graduate of Apostolic Bible Institute, St. Paul, Minnesota, class of 1957. He holds a Bachelor of Theology, and also a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Theology from Twin Cities University of West Monroe, Louisiana.

He has started many churches and built thirteen physical church buildings. His pastorates include Moline, Illinois; Bloomington, Illinois; Harare, Zimbabwe; Rex, Georgia, and presently McDonough (Atlanta), Georgia.



He and his wife Joyce spent twenty-seven years as missionaries. They labored in Liberia in West Africa and in Rhodesia in southern Africa. They labored in Rhodesia through the war when it became Zimbabwe. Since Zimbabwe, they have traveled worldwide, ministering in evangelism and leadership training seminars for the United Pentecostal Church International's Global Missions.

A great part of his ministry today is fellowshiping and entertaining people. It involves many meetings in restaurants over breakfast or lunch. In addition, members



often come for counseling over lunch. Then there are revival meetings where the evangelist is cared for by the pastor.

The Lattas also have friends all over the world. On his recent seventy-fifth birthday, he received over 300 greetings and phone calls from many parts of the world.

Joyce Latta is given to hospitality and entertains often in their home, cooking wonderful meals for church folk and visiting ministers. Sam and Joyce believe that everything they own belongs to God. They are faithful in supporting the church with their tithes, which is 10 per cent of their income, also offerings over and above their tithes and have ten Partners In Missions, which they support every month with their Faith Promise offerings.