

(English) Spiritual Leadership Principles Lesson 3 (Part 2)

Principles from Nehemiah

Welcome back to Spiritual Leadership Principles. Lesson 3 – Part 2. We will continue with the third leadership principle from the life of Nehemiah.

Turn with me once again to page 17 in your handout with leadership principle #3:
God's leader cares for the people and their situation.

Leadership is influence and Christian leadership is Christ-like influence. Jesus set an example for us through his leadership style. He modeled obedience, submission, servanthood, humility and love. He commanded us to love as he loved us. We must put this command into practice through the way each of us lead, as a follower of Christ. In 1 John 4, we learn that if we say we love God, but do not love others, we must ask ourselves, do we really love God. Our love for God will be evidenced in how we love others.

Some may say that the most important thing when leading a team or an organization is to accomplish the task. If you fulfill your mission, that is the definition of success. If you focus too much on the needs of the people you are leading, that may distract you from accomplishing the mission.

Based on God's Word and the life of Nehemiah, we see just the opposite. As a leader demonstrates love, care and concern for the people he or she is leading, this will ultimately build trust and commitment within the team or organization. This is one way the leaders can motivate and inspire others.

On page 17 you can see the three key points listed:

1. Godly leaders have a genuine love for people who are created in the image and likeness of God.
2. Godly Leaders protect their people from harm and danger.
3. Godly leaders demonstrate empathy toward the people.

We see each of these on full display in the life of Nehemiah.

In chapter 2:10 we read that when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard that Nehemiah was coming to rebuild the wall, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

Nehemiah's enemies could see that the people of Israel were suffering and were in need of help. They could even see that Nehemiah was not just called to rebuild the wall but he was also called by God to love and care for God's people.

In the face of this opposition, Nehemiah let the people know in 2:17 that he understood the trouble "we" were in. Not just "they", but "we". Nehemiah identified with the people. By rebuilding the wall, God would be glorified, the people would be protected, and they would no longer suffer derision (2:17). Nehemiah also reminds the people in 2:20 that the God of

heaven will make them prosper, and that all of them together, the servants of God, will rise up and build the wall.

God does not call a leader just to accomplish a task. God works through his people to accomplish his purposes. Leaders must have a love for God's people, which will help to motivate and inspire them to pursue God's calling and vision. This requires prayer, time, and being intentional. At times, a leader may feel like focusing on the people may be a distraction from doing the work. But without this love and care for the people, the task might get accomplished but God's vision will not be fulfilled.

Let us look at an example in chapter 5:1-13. Follow along as I read this passage and then we will make some observations related to the problem that the people were facing, and how Nehemiah demonstrated love and concern for the people.

Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. For there were those who said, "With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain that we may eat and keep alive." There were also those who said, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine." And there were those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as are their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards."

I (Nehemiah) was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. I took counsel with myself and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, "You are exacting interest, each from his brother." And I held a great assembly against them and said to them, "We, as far as we are able, have brought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers, that they may be sold to us." They were silent and could not find a word to say. So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations, our enemies? Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of the money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them." Then they said, "We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised. I also shook out the fold of my garments and said, "So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen" and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.

This was Nehemiah 5:1-13.

Here is one example of how Nehemiah demonstrated care and concern for the people.

What were some of the problems that the people were facing?

- There was a famine in the land (5:3)

- In order to have money to live and feed their families, the people had to mortgage their fields, vineyards and houses.
- The people also were in debt and had to borrow money to pay the king's tax.
- To make matters worse, the wealthy among God's people were taking advantage of their own people by charging them interest on the loans and forcing the people to have their children serve as slaves to pay their debts and the wealthy were the ones who profited.

All of this was happening while Nehemiah was leading a huge project for God to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Some leaders might have said, "What is going on with the people has nothing to do with the building project." But God's leader demonstrates care and concern for the people he is leading.

How did Nehemiah respond beginning, in verse 6?

- He was angry. I sense this may have been a righteous, godly anger.
- He took time to reflect. He took counsel with himself. Knowing Nehemiah's focus on prayer, I suspect that he brought this issue before the Lord in prayer.
- Then he confronted the problem directly. In front of all the people, he addressed the Nobles and charged them with this sinful behavior. He used the Word of God and the glory of God as the basis for his charge.
- The Nobles were to stop enslaving their brothers, stop charging interest and return their fields, vineyards and houses.
- And if they refused to do this, they would be cutoff from the community. This was the message of verse 13. The Nobles would be "shaken out and emptied" if they did not fulfill their promises.

What was the result?

- In verse 12, the Nobles said that they would restore everything to the people.
- In verse 13, the entire assembly shouted, "Amen" and praised the Lord. And the people did what they had promised.

Nehemiah took the time to listen to the outcry from the people.

- He recognized the abuse that was taking place.
- He confronted the problem directly.
- He confronted the powerful people in the community. This was risky because this group may have been helping to fund the project.
- He connected with the pain and the burden that the people were experiencing.
- He was also concerned about the glory of God and the impact that this behavior had on their witness for God among the surrounding enemies.
- And he responded immediately.

God's leader cares for the people. He takes time away from the building project to address this issue because ultimately there must be love and unity within the team in order for the project to be completed in a manner that will bring glory to God.

Nehemiah demonstrates love, authenticity, transparency, sincerity, compassion, zeal, and justice as he cares for the people.

You can see other examples of this care and concern for the people in chapter 4:10-23, 5:14-19, and 10:28-39

Nehemiah was not a leader who was removed from the people. He was leading by example. He heard the cries of the people. He heard their concerns and then he came up with a plan to help them. They surely helped to motivate and inspire the people to continue doing the work for God.

How might you assess your personal leadership style?

- How are you demonstrating care and concern for the people you are leading?
- What would they say about your leadership style?
- Share specific examples of how you have cared for your church or team and what was the impact?
- Have there been times when you focused more on the project and neglected the care of the people you were leading?
- What was the impact?

God's leader cares for the people and their situation.

At the top of page 18, we will transition to the fourth leadership principle from the life of Nehemiah.

Prayer is essential to know and fulfill God's will.

Prayer is not just about asking for things.

Prayer is part of having an intimate relationship with God. Like King David, we desire the presence of God more than anything else. In Psalm 27:8, we learn that God invited David to seek His face, and David responded, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus gives us the model for prayer.

- We focus upward on God through praise and thanksgiving.
- We surrender our will to God's will and pray for his kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- Prayer involves humility, submission, confession and repentance.
- Prayer is also bringing requests before God's throne of grace for our needs and the needs of others. But because our heart has been aligned with God's kingdom and his will, we are guided by the Spirit of God to pray in Jesus' authority and pray in a way that is focused on his will and kingdom.

- Pray is also related to asking God to protect us as we serve Him and walk in a manner worthy of His calling.
- Prayer prepares us to live out our faith and bring glory to God.

Prayerlessness is our declaration of independence from God. If you are not praying, who or what are you trusting? It is easy to begin relying on our own abilities, past achievements, and other people.

As you read through Nehemiah, we observe that his trust in the LORD is woven through the book along with his passion for prayer. Take note of some of the references to prayer that are listed in your handout on the top of page 18.

Here are just a few examples.

- Chapter 1: God's calling and vision for Nehemiah came through prayer.
- Chapter 2: The clarity of God's vision came through prayer. When the king asked Nehemiah what he needed for this project, Nehemiah prayed to the LORD and then responded to the king. This is a great example of praying without ceasing, maintaining a continual conversation with the LORD.
- Chapters 4 through 6: Through prayer, God strengthened Nehemiah to boldly face his enemies.
- Chapter 8: Prayers of thanksgiving and celebration
- Chapter 9: Prayers of humility, confession, and repentance.
- Chapter 10: Prayers of commitment and dedication

Nehemiah's example will encourage us in our personal prayer life:

- Pray about everything.
- Pray continually.
- Pray and then act.
- Pray on the moment.
- Pray for extended seasons.
- Pray out of God's Word, reminding God of who He is and all that He has promised.
- Pray with Thanksgiving.
- Pray focused on the character and glory of God.
- Pray with honesty and humility.
- Pray in the Spirit.

Prayer is the work of ministry. You may find our GTN Worship-based Prayer course helpful as you develop a biblical theology of prayer. You can listen to that course and download the transcripts and training handout.

There are nine leadership principles that we can learn from the life of Nehemiah. We have reviewed four principles so far.

1. God's leader responds to a calling.
2. God's direction and vision are sought by the leader.
3. God's leader cares for the people and their situation.
4. Prayer is essential to know and follow God's will.

The 5th leadership principle we will discuss in on page 18.

God's leader builds a team.

In Chapter 2 we saw that after Nehemiah shares the vision to rebuild the wall, many people were committed and said, "Let us rise up and build the wall."

Chapter 3 though, provides an amazing testimony of strong leadership. Please pause the recording and read all of chapter 3 on your own. Ask yourself why God included this chapter in the Bible and why it so important to the story of Nehemiah.

Pause recording now.

When you come to genealogies and long lists of people in the Bible, do you ever find yourself skimming those sections or even skipping them completely?

What is the purpose of this chapter and how does it relate to effective leadership? What observations can we make about what we see in this chapter?

- This chapter is filled with names of people who are rebuilding the wall.
- There are names of families.
- Many of the people are working on the wall in the neighborhoods where they live.
- There is a diversity of backgrounds (priests and Levites, nobles, goldsmiths, district rulers, perfumers, merchants, guards, and many others who are not identified).
- They are unified around a common vision.
- There is greater creativity and innovation when more people are part of the team.
- With a team, there is greater balance of gifts and abilities.

One purpose of this chapter is to highlight the importance of leaders building teams to accomplish great things for God.

Godly leaders organize and delegate, doing only what they can do and equipping and empowering others to do what they can do. Leaders are delegators more than doers, a team player rather than a soloist!

In Lesson 1, we said that one of the reasons for the lack of godly leaders in churches, is that pastors and leaders often do not share the work of ministry with others. Leaders are often

resistant to delegating responsibility and authority, which hinders the development of those within our churches.

Effective leaders recruit teams and delegate responsibility to others. After Nehemiah had assessed the situation and formulated a plan of attack, he shared his plan with others and allowed them to help with the work. Effective leaders realize their dependence on others and that it takes many hands to accomplish a great task for God.

As we build teams, there is no place for micromanagement.

When we invite people to join our team, personal invitations are essential. These invitations should not be communicated through email, text, letter, or even through a third party. Jesus called people personally. He said, come, follow me. People are not looking to be invited to a task. They want to follow a leader who they can trust and learn from. They also want to be invited to a cause that is bigger than themselves. A personal invitation communicates that the person and the cause are valued and important.

As teams are formed, it is essential for leaders to delegate not just responsibility but also authority. Responsibility allows people to participate in the work. Authority allows people to have a sense of ownership. Team members have the authority to make certain decisions without checking back with the leader on every issue. Effective team leaders have the wisdom and discernment to delegate responsibility and the authority to others to make the best decisions in the moment.

This leadership technique communicates trust and develops people for future leadership opportunities. As people are faithful in the little things, leaders can trust them with greater levels of responsibility and authority.

Building teams is hard work. Leaders may think to themselves that it would be much easier to just do the work themselves. They know the work will be completed in the right way if done themselves. For larger projects though, this is not realistic. Leaders must invest time into building teams which will ultimately develop the skills of each team member.

Here are a few questions to consider:

- Are you doing too much in your leadership style?
- Are you holding onto things too tightly?
- Are you doing all the work or are you living out the model of Ephesians 4, as leaders who are continually equipping others to do the work of ministry?
- Do you find it hard to delegate? If yes, why is it hard to delegate responsibility and authority? Why is it hard to share the work with others?
- Is your church or ministry more like a bus or an ant hill?
Buses have one driver and many passengers. Ant hills involve the entire community. Every ant has a role to play.

We were teaching our Spiritual Gift training with a group of pastors and leaders in Senegal. We asked this question of the group. One of the pastors said, “My church is more like a bus, and I am the driver, and I now see that I am source of the problem.

He needed to begin delegating responsibility and authority so that his church would look less like a bus and more like an anthill.

May Nehemiah chapter 3 always remind you of the principle that godly leaders build teams. And when you have a highly functioning team, amazing things can be accomplished for God and His glory.

Let's discuss one more principle before we take a break and continue with part 3 of this lesson.

Turn to the top of page 19 for leadership principle 6: God's leader motivates and inspires.

Effective leaders inspire unity and commitment among their team members. Nehemiah led his people in the face of intense opposition; yet, because of his leadership style, the people did not run away in fear. They continued the work until it was finished.

Effective leaders give praise and thanksgiving to God for all things. In chapter 8, after Ezra reads from the Book of the Law, Nehemiah called on the Levites to stand up and praise the Lord for all He had done to help them succeed in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah also encouraged the people to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in remembrance of God's faithfulness to the people of God during the time of Moses when they were wandering in the wilderness. These celebrations helped to shift the perspective of the people from their daily circumstance and focus upward on the power and provision of God. We read this in chapter 8:9-19. The people were filled with great joy knowing that the LORD is their strength (8:10, 17).

In fact, most of what Nehemiah did as a leader helped to motivate and inspire the people to accomplish the task of rebuilding the wall in just 52 days.

- Nehemiah led by example in chapter 4.
- He cared for the people in chapter 5.
- He taught the Word of God in Chapter 8.
- He celebrated the team's accomplishments with thanksgiving before the LORD in chapters 8 and 12.

Implementing most of these leadership principles contribute to **motivating and inspiring** team members. Listed below are a few techniques that Christian leadership experts all agree help to **motivate and inspire** organizations and teams of people. For each concept, I noted which of the nine leadership principles from the life of Nehemiah map to the each of the concepts.

1. **Clear vision and purpose**

Principle #1: God's leader responds to a call.

Principle #2: God's direction and vision are sought by the leader.

2. **Engage the people**

Fosters a sense of ownership, shared vision, teams, that team members are valued and trusted.

Principle #3: God's leader cares for the people and their situation.

Principle #5: God's leader builds a team.

3. **Divine Confidence**

Rooted in faith in God's promises, remind people continually of God's favor and faithfulness

Principle #4: Prayer is essential to know and follow God's will.

4. **Perseverance and Encouragement**

Remain committed to the vision even when discouraged, Refresh vision

Principle #6: God's leader motivates and inspires.

Principle #7: God's leader is not discouraged by adversity.

5. **Planning and Organization**

Plan, Address challenges and develop solutions, execute the plan and report progress, pay attention to details

Principle #2: God's direction and vision are sought by the leader .

Principle #8: God's leader discovers ways to resolve conflict.

6. **Celebrate and Gratitude**

Along the way, end of the project, create sense of community/unity)

Principle #6: God's leader motivates and inspires.

What are examples of how **you** motivate and inspire the people on your teams or within your church?

- Celebrate key milestones.
- Gather the team for time in God's Word and prayer.
- Take time to share personal and project prayer requests and then thank the Lord when prayers are answered.
- Recognize team members for specific accomplishments.
- Encourage team members to recognize and encourage other team members.
- Call out those times when you see team members living out the vision, mission and values of the organization.
- Schedule periodic meetings to remind the team of the vision. Remember that over time, vision leaks. It is necessary to recast vision from time to time.

This is a good spot to end Part 2 of Lesson 3 and we will continue with the final 3 leadership principles from Nehemiah in Part 3.

- *Principle #7: God's leader is not discouraged by adversity.*
- *Principle #8: God's leader discovers ways to resolve conflict.*
- *Principle #9: God's leader has person God-given convictions and commitments that they will not compromise.*