

Building Leadership

by Kevin Rhodes

Effective leadership requires identifying problems, admitting they exist, and taking action to fix them, all while being guided by faith and not sight.

Duration: 36:46

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:11-16, Nehemiah 2:18, Jeremiah 6:14, John 17:17, Acts 20:26-27, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Jude 1:3, Revelation 3:15-16

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of convincing people to follow God's way through a study of His word. They highlight the need for leaders to inspire confidence and get others excited about being a part of God's work. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of not running away from controversy and facing the reality of the situation. They encourage leaders to persevere and not give up when faced with challenges, using the example of Paul's attitude in Second Timothy. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the role of leaders in guiding others and staying committed to God's way.

Transcript

But it is good to be here. Appreciate your presence and your interest in this topic and this subject of the entire lectureship. I also want to thank Dave Dugan for such an excellent introduction to my lesson because it is important to understand the problems that we have faced and what's been out there if we're going to understand how important it is to build leadership.

If we don't recognize the nature of the failures of the past then we truly will repeat them and we do not want to do that. You know, one of the things that needs to be changed is our own perception of where we are in history in the church. Generally, what I have heard most often stated is that it seems like we are repeating everything that happened a hundred years ago and that the state of the church, we go back, we look back, we see how the church came into, was restored by some early efforts and some struggles early on, how that they really had to work through some things before coming down and re-establishing through a study of the scriptures the true nature of the church.

And that they went through this period of great growth and study, not without its difficulties, but then came a period in which they thought that they had really finally had come out and understood some things. But then there were these things in the background all the time. They were not nearly as strong as they thought they were.

And soon division crept in, in the latter portion of the 19th century. And so the division became self-evident in the early 20th century. And so they started over.

We might look back and say, well, is that where we are today and talking about the remnant? No. If we want to understand where we are, we have to go back to look at Israel. The comparison with the past is good, but we need to realize and look at the background of Israel, where they were taken out of Egypt as slaves, wandering in the wilderness, despite all they saw of what God had done and still wandering and wandering for 40 years.

This is with the leadership of Moses going into the promised land and taking it under the leadership of Joshua and then soon starting a path downward, revived under the leadership briefly of Saul until he fell into the same ways and then to reach their heyday under David, held on for a while under Solomon, and then there was division. And we find that there was a portion of the people that went off and immediately were in extreme apostasy, you might say. No longer recognizable, but Judah went on and Judah continued and would have strong times under strong leaders and rough times under bad leaders.

But the path was always downward on the overall scope until it came to the point in which God determined that they were going to go into captivity. And so they went into captivity as Nebuchadnezzar came through in various waves beginning around 606 B.C. And he took them away into captivity, uprooted them from the place in which they had grown to have their identity with a place to remove them, many of them, far from that place so that they might, through God's providence, regain an understanding of their identity, not in regard to a physical position, but in their relationship to God, which they eventually did. And it was after this period that they are allowed then to return under the leadership of the Medo-Persian king Cyrus, who sent them back and allowed them to return.

They returned to Judah, worked on the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel and then Ezra. But then they just stopped. And here they are coming back.

They got the temple built up. But Jerusalem, the city, is in total disrepair. The walls of that city, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and therefore they were totally vulnerable to anything that would come around them.

They were down and they stayed down. They were not a fortress. They were just rubble.

And so the people, having thought that they restored true worship to God, had stopped the work. And so they didn't appreciate the true nature of the challenge that lay before them. Today, for many reasons, this has already been cataloged for us.

The church lies in disrepair. And it is the case that we have, in many cases, just accepted our position and thought we're doing pretty well. And so we didn't prepare for a future of tough times.

We looked around and there were walls that were down in disrepair all along. We ignored them. And we didn't appreciate the kind of challenges that might be there for us.

Nehemiah was serving still, even though the people had returned. Nehemiah was serving as a cupbearer for the Medo-Persian king. And he gets a report of this condition back in his homeland.

But Jerusalem was just waste. Nothing was being done about it. And so after praying to God about the situation, he goes before the king and makes a request.

Can I return back to my homeland in order to build the walls of Jerusalem again? So if you will turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah 2. The king agreed to his request. And so Nehemiah has gone on and journeyed all the way across until he returns home to see Jerusalem. And we want to pick this up reading in verse 11 of Nehemiah 2. So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem, nor is there any animal with me except the one on which I rode. And I went out by night through the valley gate of the serpent well and the refuse gate and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down and gates which were burned with fire.

Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley and viewed the wall. Then I turned back and entered by the valley gate and so returned.

And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done. I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work. Then I said to them, you see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, its gates are burned with fire.

Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach. And I told them of the hand of my God, which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, let us rise up and build.

Then they set their hands to this good work. But when Simbalat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us and said, what is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king? So I answered them and said to them, the God of heaven himself will prosper us. Therefore, we his servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.

When Nehemiah saw that something needed to be done in Jerusalem, he moved quickly to see that it was done. This, among other things, is what made Nehemiah such a fantastic leader. If the church, the remnant, is to find renewed vigor and grow in the future, we must learn to lead as Nehemiah did.

And so let us consider his plan of approach and leadership from our text. First of all, leaders identify the problems. Let's look at verses 11-16.

So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I told no one my God had put in my heart to do with Jerusalem, nor was there any animal with me except the one on which I rode.

And I went out by night through the valley gate to the serpent well and the refuge gate and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley and viewed the wall.

Then I turned back and entered by the valley gate and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done. I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the others who did the work.

Leaders begin by identifying the problems. You will notice that he was honest in his evaluation, but he went out and he did not worry about telling everyone else what he was doing, what he thought immediately. He went out first and said, what actually exists in this situation? Leadership must be on their own willingness to go out.

You know, he could have taken a poll, I guess. What do you think the problem is here? You think these people did not know that the walls were down? You get up in the morning and you look out and the walls are down. That was not the problem.

He wanted to go see for himself what needed to be done. He wasn't going just to see, oh, is there a problem there? He knew that. He was going on a personal inspection tour in order to identify the problems and what needed to be done to fix the problem.

And that has to begin, though, in leadership with a personal examination. If you are going to be part of the solution, you must first make sure as a leader that you are not part of the problem. 2 Corinthians 13, verse 5, Paul told the Corinthians, examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.

Prove your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobate. It is important for leaders to first be critical of themselves and their own work, their own portion of the congregation and the church. What am I doing? How have I contributed? Where do we stand? What needs to be fixed? Is there something I need to consider in my own action that has been either part of the problem or that I have not been doing that needs to be done in order to be part of the solution? If we are not willing to take care of that first, then we are not prepared for leadership.

If we are not willing to recognize that we have to do some personal introspection, then we are not ready to go around and do any external inspection. But notice what he did is he looked around to see what could be changed, not at what could not. So many times you end up and leaders in congregations go around and they will be able to give you a good evaluation of various things.

Well, you know, the problem here is that ten years ago this happened and then a year ago this happened. You're not going to change that. You cannot change the past.

And therefore, that's a lot of times why we try to use it as our evaluation because it carries no responsibility. There's no responsibility to be able to say, well, so and so, this person who died five years ago, they did this. You can't change that.

Leadership looks around and says, what can be changed? What can and needs to be changed in order to make the situation better? And therefore, leaders also must be willing to look for problems only if they're also willing to attempt to fix them. Leadership is not just about the inspection process and being able to point fingers, dare I say, 9-11 commission. It's about trying to find a solution to the existing problem.

Pointing fingers solves absolutely nothing in the Lord's church, and yet that's often the approach that people take. In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 58, notice carefully, it says, therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work. That word means activity of the Lord.

As much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. So make sure that we're out there looking for problems in order to fix them. And also, let us make sure as leaders to understand that identifying the problem is not the same as fixing the problem.

The fact that we can go through and say, well, you know, brother so-and-so, he has been causing problems here for years, which oftentimes is true. So what are you going to do about it? Have you addressed him on that issue? If he is doing something that is sinful, have you pointed out that it is simple and requires repentance? Or is it just accepted that that's just brother so-and-so? In which case, that's just identifying the problem and doing nothing to create a solution. But most of all, what leaders must be willing to do is to be willing to admit that problems exist.

If those people who spend their life with blinders on, not willing to see where really the problems are coming from and why something might be a problem, are not ever going to be ready for leadership. You have to be out there with your eyes wide open and recognizing that no, we are not perfect. That none of us are perfect.

And there are going to be problems. And that means we have to be willing to acknowledge them, even if maybe we are part of the problem. Psalm 51, verse 3, David acknowledged his transgressions.

That was good leadership. He acknowledged. If there's a problem as a leader that the leadership has had, acknowledge it to the congregation.

They already know. Acknowledge it. Make sure that they can go up and the people can feel comfortable now saying these are honest leaders.

They don't think that they're above us in some way. We also must be willing to acknowledge that there are problems in the church and that there are problems that come up in a congregation. Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 10, says, Now I beseech you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.

That was an acknowledgement. Hey, there are problems. Wake up.

There are problems here. You need to deal with them. And as you're going out there and you're going to identify the problem, if you're going to be a leader, you cannot be afraid of the truth.

That here is how the situation lies. You look at what Nehemiah found. Gates, rubble, burn with fire.

He acknowledges that. Here's what I found. Here's the situation as it exists.

Because if we're not willing to see the reality of the situation, then there's no real way that we're going to be able to apply a solution to it. We'll just spend our time kind of putting a salve on a cut that is, you know, an inch deep. I think it's a little more serious than that.

We have to deal with that problem. Second of all, though, notice verse 17. Leaders are men of action.

Then I said to them, you see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste. Its gates are burning with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach.

In 1 Corinthians 16, verse 13, Apostle Paul said, Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Leadership, my friends, is not telling. It is doing.

Communication is a part of it, but it is not the whole part. Communication of the situation is the beginning part of the motion, but they need to see that you are in it with them. James 1, verse 22, it says, Be you

doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Now, let's be honest. Let's look at that situation that he found. You're going to be men of action, right? You also, to be men of action, need to be men of optimism as leaders.

Not that you're not realistic. He goes on and he gave an honest, realistic evaluation of that situation. Now, I've recently told the congregation there in Granbury Street in regard to optimism.

We need to understand this. You probably heard the expression that you can tell the difference between an optimist and a pessimist by a glass of water. The optimist thinks that the glass is half full.

The pessimist thinks that the glass is half empty. That is not really good. An optimist is someone who looks at a glass of water, no matter how much water is in it, and knows that it could be full.

And that's how we're going to have to start looking at the Lord's Church. Because let me tell you, friends, Nehemiah, he didn't have half a glass of water. He had just maybe a little bit down there at the bottom to work with.

We had to fill the cup up. But he knew it could be done. And that's why it took leadership.

Leadership means you address problems. You don't ignore them. You know, that's one of those same problems Dave mentioned about that sin plus time doesn't equal repentance.

Well, a problem plus time doesn't mean a solution. It means probably more problems. Leadership must be involved in action and take care of them.

Matthew 18, verses 15 through 20. When Jesus addresses when you have a brother sin against you, what's the problem? He says, whatever it is, you act. You do something.

You take the lead in the situation. If you've got someone who's done something against you, you take the lead. Really, it goes back in Matthew chapter five, verses 21 and following.

And he gives the other information. That is, if you've done something against someone else, you take the lead. I'm tired of being the bigger person.

Well, what does that mean? You're ready to be the small person for a while. Think about that. We're going to have to start addressing real problems in the church.

If we're the remnant. Will we just try to paper over them? We won't be the remnant. You can't paper over problems, sweep them under the rug and be God's people.

If there is internal strife, you deal with internal strife. You're just instead of key. Would you two start getting along? Philippians four, two and three.

You deal with it. I'm not going to bring up what the problem is. It doesn't matter.

You get to it and work it out. If there's a problem with error, deal with it. Philippians chapter one, verse 17.

Now, depending upon the reason for the error, if there is ignorance involved, misunderstanding, you can't even deal with it as such. Notice the difference in 1 Thessalonians chapter five, verses 14 and 15 of how to deal with those kinds of problems. But deal with them.

You've got a weak person. You help to strengthen the weak person. You've got a disorderly person.

You address and discipline the disorderly person. But in either case, we need to be set for the defense of the gospel. Philippians chapter one, verse 17.

If we are men of action as leaders, then we also must look for long term solutions, not stopgap measures. When he comes to them, he doesn't say, you know, I noticed that you've got a little bit of a problem here. Maybe, just maybe, we could build this gate.

Wouldn't take much work. Just have to volunteer for a little while. But that was not the assessment of the problem.

In Acts 15, when they had the gathering to deal with the issue of circumcision, they were all upon sorts of possibilities to find a stopgap measure. Well, you do it this way there and we'll do it this way here. And we'll just agree to disagree.

They dealt with it and said, here's what is right. And you go out and you tell people in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and Galilee and wherever you're going, Paul, that this is what is right. Now you look over how we tend to handle problems in the past.

And let's just admit, acknowledge our own part of the problem that we have spent a whole lot of time bailing water and never tried to plug the hole in the boat. Wow, that might have to get down in there and get dirty. But it also would fix the problem and the bailing doesn't do any good as long as the hole's still there.

Long term solutions are seldom the easiest way out, which is why we don't do them. They're not the most appealing way. You might actually lose some people when you do things God's way.

We need leaders to consider what ought to be done according to God's word and then do it. Communicate God's word that it should be done. It must be done.

It ought to be done. That's what Nehemiah was doing. Here's what we are going to do.

Here's what needs to be done. Convincing people. Here's why it must be done.

Go back to second Corinthians chapter five or seven. For we walk by faith and not by sight. If we truly walk by faith, which the remnant must, then it means God's way is the only way.

And if he says this is how we're going to handle things, then that's how we handle it. Our work as leaders is to simply convince everyone that that's God's way through a study of his word. It's going to require some sacrifices, my friends, but we can't wait around for everyone else to catch up.

We have to take care of it now. Number three. Leaders inspire confidence.

Leaders inspire confidence. Verse 18. And I told them of the hand of my God, which had been good upon me and also of the King's word that he had spoken to me.

So they said, let us rise up and build. Then they set their hearts for this good work. Part of leadership is getting people excited about being a part of what you are already excited about and are already a part of.

That's leadership. It's when you're saying this is what it's all about. Come on, be a part of this, because we're going to do it.

That requires of us to encourage every member often to be a part. It's so much easier to complain about the people who aren't working than to go ask them if they might want to work. Let us consider one another to provoke one another to love them to good works.

Hebrews chapter 10, verse 24 says that takes some determination. It takes perseverance because no one is going to get excited overnight. Sometimes some people are a hard sell to think that God's word actually works.

It takes some work on some people. Therefore, we have to give that kind of effort and that kind of work. Second Timothy, chapter four, verses six through eight, you look at the attitude Paul had throughout his entire life when he was telling them that I'm now ready to be offered the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought a good fight. I've finished the course. I've kept the faith.

Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, who gave to me that day, not to me only, but also to all who love his appearing. Leaders do not give up the first time something doesn't work. If it's God's way, then you try it again because you know it'll work.

If it's a matter of method, then you go on and try some other way to get it to work. You don't give up because your role is not to. You can't afford to get down about it.

You have to spend time growing confidence in others that it will work. If people will just do things God's way. Leaders, therefore, should be growing others confidence in the truth that needs to be done.

Not just here's the message you need to accept it. But how do we go about teaching people that they ought to have confidence in that message once they hear it from God's word? You should know the truth and the truth shall make you free. John chapter 8, verse 32 says.

Oh, how love of the law it is my meditation all the day. Psalm 119, verse 97. People need to become honest, have confidence in honesty and in intellectual integrity that God's truth when understood correctly is the answer to life's problems, to the church's problems, to all problems if we will apply it in the right way.

Therefore, people need to see that their leaders are serious about leading and about the work. They need to know that the leaders are committed because they're not going to be committed if the leaders are committed. They have to see it.

So this is a good idea. Why don't you go take care of that sometime? Yeah, whatever. It doesn't really matter to me.

We just need to have a program. That's not going to cut it. Number four, verse 19.

Leaders do not run away from controversy. But when Simbalat the Horonite Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us and said, what is this thing that you were doing? Will you rebel against the king? Jude, Jude said in verse three that he wanted to write to them about the common salvation, but it became necessary for him to write for them to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. What was happening? They were running away from controversy.

And when I say running, I mean they were quiet about it, ignoring it, not willing to admit it was there or do anything about it. My friends, truth is truth no matter how controversial people might find that truth. John 17, verse 17, sanctify them through that truth.

Thy word is truth. Leaders are not afraid to rock the boat over truth. You know, if you've got you've got a skunk in the boat, I'm rocking the boat to the skunk gets out.

There are times in which we have to get some things out of the boat if the boat can stay afloat. Leaders, though, need to know the difference between truth and opinion. That is, leaders need a good understanding of God's word so that they don't end up rocking the boat when they shouldn't be rocking the boat where all of a sudden we have a controversy when there's no controversy.

And my friends, that's as much a problem in the brotherhood right now as anything. What do we have? We've got some people who never rock the boat no matter what's in the boat and other people who are doing their best to knock people out of the boat. Both are a problem and both have no part in the Lord's church.

God doesn't accept that as righteous behavior and neither should we. Error, though, will always cause controversy. Galatians chapter one, six through nine.

Paul said, I marvel that you're so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ into another gospel, which is not another. But there be some that trouble you that would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we are an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As I said before, so say now again, if any man preach any other gospel to you than that which you have received, let him be accursed. I believe that was controversial. Controversy was begun in the garden by Satan, not by God.

Genesis three. Controversy was begun in Israel by Ahab, not by Elijah. Brethren, controversy for the sake of controversy is sin.

But controversy for the sake of truth is divine command. There is, of course, the alternative. It's called compromise.

You might have read about a particular congregation. Revelation chapter three. I know your works that you neither cold nor hot.

I wish that you were cold or hot, but because you are neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Revelation chapter three verse fifteen sixteen. When the truth is compromised in any way, Satan is the only one who wins.

You don't win. The church doesn't win. Jesus Christ doesn't win.

You cannot compromise your way into righteousness. It can't be done. Those who are trying to satisfy the people to say peace, peace when there is no peace.

Jeremiah chapter six verse fourteen. And then there's also the do nothing alternative. A favorite of many.

Actually, for twenty verse twenty six and twenty seven, Paul said that I am pure the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God without proper direction. That is, when you don't do what you ought to be doing, people are going to wonder. And leaders who do nothing but try to avoid controversy are not leaders at all.

Number five, leaders trust God. Verse twenty. So I answered them and said to them, the God of heaven himself will prosper us.

Therefore, we his servants will arise and build. But you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem. Leaders, by the way, as a sub point, always remember that they are God's servants and that's why they trust him.

When some leader in the church forgets he is God's servant, he ceases to be a leader God can trust. We need, though, if we trust God, we will have expectations to succeed, not to fail. I planted a pot of water, but God gave the increase first Corinthians three and six.

It is that trust that carries us through the hard times that are coming. We think it's hard. It is coming and it's going to be hard.

We'd better trust in God. We're going to make it through some one hundred and twenty one versus one and two. I lift up my eyes into the hills from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. It is better to trust in the Lord and put confidence in man. Some one hundred and eighteen versus eight says, so don't trust in men, don't trust in yourselves.

Men fail and break promises. Second Peter, chapter three, verse nine points out that God is always with us. Hebrews chapter 13, verses five and six.

So where are we? Where are we in the church today? In my opinion, brethren. The church today is not ready to build the wall. Because we're still in captivity.

It's time to acknowledge that this didn't happen overnight. It went through a long succession, just as Israel did. A failing to appreciate God's truth.

And we wonder why people. Cannot recognize the problems that are going on throughout where people are taking the name off the door, and I'm glad they are finally. But why do they feel they can? Because it doesn't matter anymore.

They've done their job. Judah kept going down and down and down. Because they kept relying on this program or that man to make everything right.

It was going into captivity. That is the recognition of the hard truth that we are small. That even those among our number willing to do God's truth is very, very small.

Even after all the hard times and losing people. Remember those people in the days when Nebuchadnezzar had already come through where Jeremiah was dealing with people who were trying to find a compromise alternative or who were trying to get Egypt to help. You know, if we can just do like what they're doing over here and be a little more, you know, user friendly, as Egypt written all over it, you won't find Daniel in such places.

We're in captivity. And also this means, if you'll notice the last part of verse 20, you have no heritage or right of memorial in Jerusalem. There are people who still have Church of Christ on the door do not have Church of Christ in their heart because they do not have Jesus Christ in their heart and they have no memorial or heritage and they're not part of the remnant.

And that's sad. That's not happy thing. That's sad.

But it's only when we recognize that we are in captivity that we're going to understand how important it is to prepare leaders now and for tomorrow who can build the walls from the time comes. We have been weakened because of weak, inactive, ineffective and unqualified leaders. And that means that it means both in the eldership and in the pulpit.

But what about the leaders of tomorrow? What are they doing today? The church needs men who are not afraid of problems, men who will act and work instead of just talking and giving orders, men who inspire confidence, men who are dedicated to the truth, and men who build their lives on the trust for God. We need people who will truly lead spiritually. The remnant needs those of you here to be leaders.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23802.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/kevin-rhodes/building-leadership/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net