

Leadership Qualities of Nehemiah

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a concern for people and a burden for God's work, and highlights Nehemiah's example as a model for leaders.

Scripture: Nehemiah 1:1-3, Nehemiah 2:1, Nehemiah 2:11, Nehemiah 5:1-13, Nehemiah 9:1-3, Nehemiah 10:1, Nehemiah 12:30-31, Nehemiah 13:4-25

Topics: "Leadership", "Servanthood"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the leadership qualities of Nehemiah, highlighting his deep concern for the people and the state of Jerusalem, which ignited a burden in his heart. Nehemiah's selflessness, dedication to prayer, and ability to motivate others are presented as essential traits for effective leadership in God's work. Despite lacking modern resources, Nehemiah's commitment to the glory of God and care for the oppressed exemplifies true servant leadership. His actions, including fasting, organizing the people, and purifying the temple, demonstrate a zealous commitment to God's holiness and the welfare of His people. Poonen challenges listeners to emulate Nehemiah's example of sacrificial leadership and concern for others.

Transcript

In Nehemiah 1:1-3 we find that Nehemiah was concerned enough to find out the state of the exiles who had returned and of Jerusalem. This is the primary characteristic of any man whom God uses - he has a concern for people and then God gives him a burden. If you want to serve the Lord, begin with a concern for others. God never uses a man who has no concern for others. Nehemiah asked Hanani, "How are things going on there?" And Hanani told him that the walls were broken down and the gates burned with fire. Nehemiah was concerned about the broken walls and the burnt gates. When he heard the news, he wept and mourned for many days, and he fasted and prayed. That is the type of man whom God is looking for today - one who has a concern and a burden when he sees the condition of God's church.

Nehemiah lived under the old covenant. He did not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, as we have. He did not have a full Bible, no church-fellowship, books, tapes or conferences such as we have today in such abundance. He did not know anything about the cross. Yet he had such a tremendous burden. He was not a "full time worker". He was a man who had a secular job. He supported himself and served the Lord. Nehemiah is a great example of a man who was absolutely selfless and who was concerned for the glory of God's Name alone. If we can be challenged to emulate his example, God may be able to do something

with our lives too.

Nehemiah had never been sad in the king's presence before (Neh. 2:1). He was not a gloomy type of person. The king had always seen him happy. And now he was sad. But he was not sad concerning himself or his family. He was sad because Jerusalem was in such shambles. O that there were more people in the church like that today!

Nehemiah went to Jerusalem and stayed alone three days without going anywhere - probably fasting and praying (Neh.2:11). Then he rose at night and took a few men with him. He had not told anyone what God had put into his mind, because he knew that there were enemies who would try and hinder him (Neh. 2:10). He knew it was no use gathering people together who had no burden for God's work. So he went with just a few and inspected the walls and gates.

Nehemiah was a great organizer and a man who could motivate people. The people worked with him happily, because he worked himself. That is the type of leader God needs today - one who will fast and pray, who has a concern for God's name, who is good at organising and motivating people to work for the Lord, and one who works with his own hands as well.

In Nehemiah 5:1-13, we see Nehemiah's great care for the poor and the oppressed and those who were in debt, in their midst. He spoke to their creditors and got them all released from their debts. In verse 18, we see Nehemiah's wonderful example in not taking any of the money he was entitled to, as governor of the province - even though he was working so hard and feeding 150 Jews and many from other nations at his table daily! He was a hospitable man who served God, like Noah and Paul did, at his own expense. He used all the money available for building the wall. Here was a man who lived with great sacrifice and did not use money that was used for God's work in any way for himself. Wherever God sees a servant of His who is faithful with money, there will be no limit to which God uses him. God forsakes many of His servants, because He sees them taking advantage of their brothers financially.

In Chapter 9, we read what God did through Nehemiah. The chapter begins with the Israelites fasting, confessing their sins and separating themselves from the heathen (v.1,2). Then they had a three-hour Bible-study time and three hours of praising the Lord and confessing their sins. It was revival all over again (v.3). Then the Levites stood up and cried to the Lord with a loud voice (v.4). From v.6 to v.31, we have the longest recorded prayer in the whole Bible. The Levites then rehearsed the history of Israel from Abraham's time, and their failure during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness and during the times of the judges and the kings and acknowledging that every judgment that God had sent was just and right. They repented and signed a document before God, with Nehemiah signing first of all (Neh. 10:1).

In Chapter 12, we read how Nehemiah organised the people to look after the gates and those who were to lead the times of praise. Notice in the movement of God's people from Babylon to Jerusalem, the constant emphasis on fasting, prayer, confession of sin, many hours of Bible-study, long meetings and much praising and worshipping of God.

In Chapter 13, we see Nehemiah's zeal for purity in God's house. He went into the temple and did something similar to what Jesus did when He cleansed the temple in Jerusalem. Nehemiah found that people had allowed their unconverted relatives to stay in the temple. Eliashib the priest was related to Tobiah (Neh. 13:4) and had prepared a large room for him. Nehemiah chased them all out. He "threw out all of Tobiah's household goods and cleaned up the house of God" (v.8). He also noticed that many people were making money by selling things on the Sabbath (v.15). He rebuked them and warned them and even

threatened to use force against them (v.21). If people don't fear God then they must fear a man of God. He also discovered that some of the Jews had married non-Jewish women. Nehemiah "contended with them, cursed them, slapped them, and pulled out their hair and their beards, and made them swear never to give their children in marriage to non-Jews again." (v.25). Thus Nehemiah purified the priesthood without any partiality, appointed duties for the priests and even got down to the nitty-gritty of arranging for the supply of wood for the sacrifices (v.30,31)

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