

Six Marks of Lay Leadership

Nehemiah 2:9-20

I am reading a book now that has challenged my thinking in the area of leadership by Hans Finzel entitled *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*. He defines leadership and identifies leaders:

“Leadership is influence. Anyone who influences someone else to do something has led a person. A leader takes people where they would never go on their own.” That definition includes each of you!

“You are a leader if you are leading a company, a ministry, a department, one or two coworkers, a Girl Scout club, and army platoon, a committee, or your family” (Hans Finzel. *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*. pages 19-21). That identification includes you!

Here are the Six Marks of Lay Leaders:

1. He/she shows concern for God’s Work (Nehemiah 1:1-4)
2. He/she prays for God’s people (Nehemiah 1:5-11)
3. He/she follows his leader (Nehemiah 1:11-2:8)
- 4. He/she motivates his followers (Nehemiah 2:9-20)**
5. He/she organizes his work (Nehemiah 3:1-32)
6. He/she handles his opposition (Nehemiah 4-6)

Nehemiah is now actually facing his second impossible situation as a leader.

The **first** was persuading a Persian King to change his law. But through prayer and planning God enabled Nehemiah to influence King Artaxerxes to reverse the Law of the Medes and Persians.

Now, Nehemiah faced his second impossible situation: Motivate God’s people to rebuild the walls that had been broken down for more than 100 years.

1. This situation was impossible with three conflicts:

Conflict Number One: Enemies Opposed his Leadership (2:9-10)

1500 miles and two months later, Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem. Nehemiah in his planning anticipated opposition and had secured the king’s army to accompany him.

Every significant work for God will be opposed. Read the book of Acts for confirmation.

What is the saying, “If can’t stand the heat get out of kitchen.” The only problem your life is the kitchen or maybe the pressure cooker in the kitchen.

Conflict Number Two: Overwhelming Task (2:11-16)

There were almost two miles of broken down walls with massive stones that had been tumbled into the valleys below.

Maybe your impossible task is not a wall but an unsaved person who refuses to even listen any more.

Conflict Number Three: Complacency about God’s Work

The wall had been down for over 100 years and the people had grown accustomed to the status quo. Another attempt was made about 13 years before and Artaxerxes stopped it as recorded in Ezra 4.

You’ve tried to conquer that sin, but you have failed again and again and now you are complacent and discouraged. You’ve tried to grow your ministry and it has declined. You are defeated.

2. The Solutions for these Impossible Conflicts

Solution Number One: Identify the Problem (2:11-16)

One verse covers two months of travel (2:11) and six verses (2:12-16) describe one night of fact gathering.

Again we see Nehemiah planning. He had generally planned before his arrival and now he gets specific. He does not just haul off and do something.

Proverbs 18:13 “He that answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

Nehemiah saw both the problem and the potential but he did not sugar coat the conflict. Nehemiah 2:13-16 is Nehemiah’s “Houston, we have a problem.”

What is the problem you face? Is it an unsaved person? Is it a habit? Is it a broken relationship?

Is it your ministry that is not growing? Do we have the courage to admit there is a problem?

Solution Number Two: Challenge God’s People 2:17-18)

A. We must identify with the people “us” and “we” (2:17a). In 1 Thessalonians 5:12 Leaders “Labor among and preside over.” Leaders not only identify the problem, they volunteer to be part of the solution.

B. We must challenge with godly inward motives not external financial rewards (2:17b)

1. Nehemiah did not offer bonuses nor all-expenses-paid vacation to Hawaii.
2. Nehemiah did not want to build a memorial to himself.
3. Nehemiah wanted to honor God.

It would be like me challenging you to read through God’s Word this year with the reward of \$500.00. What is a better reward? Read in order to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ in order to be a more useful servant of God.

C. We must challenge with God’s past faithfulness (2:18a)

1. Nehemiah challenged with the past victory God had just given with King Artaxerxes
2. David did the same as he faced his impossible situation in 1 Sam 17

D. Response of the people to the challenge (2:18b). The people rise to Nehemiah’s challenge with “Let us rise up and build.”

Dale Carnegie tells of a mill manager whose men were not producing. The owner, whose name was Charles Schwab, asked why. The manager had no idea. “I’ve coaxed the men; I’ve pushed them; I’ve sworn and cursed; I’ve threatened them with damnation and being fired. But nothing works. They just won’t produce.”

“How many heats did your shift make today?” Schwab asked.”

“Six.”

Without saying another word, Schwab picked up a piece of chalk and wrote a big figure 6 on the floor. Then he walked away.

When the night shift came in, they saw the 6 and asked what it meant. “The big boss was here today,” someone said. “He asked how many heats the day shift made, and we told him six. He chalked it on the floor.”

The next morning Schwab walked through the mill again. The night shift had rubbed out the 6 and replaced it with an even bigger 7. When the day shift reported the next day, they saw the 7. So the night shift thought it was better than the day shift, did it? They’d show them. They pitched in furiously, and before they had left that evening they had rubbed out the 7 and replaced it with a 10. It was a 66 percent increase in just twenty-four hours, and all because of Schwab’s challenge. Carnegie concludes, “If you want to win . . . spirited men . . . to your way of thinking . . . throw down a challenge” (Dale Carnegie. *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963, pages 173-176).

“Leaders can’t do the job by themselves and workers can’t accomplish much without leadership” (Warren W. Wiersbe. *Be Determined*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992, page 33).

Solution Number Three: Overcome Problems

A. The Problem (2:19)

1. The opposition ridiculed “they laughed us to scorn.” Why? Only because Nehemiah was

doing what God had put in his heart.

2. The opposition “despised us.” Why? Only because Nehemiah was saving God’s work from

extinction.

3. The opposition criticized “What is this thing that you do? Will you rebel against the king?”

Criticism is the weapon of those who have no other. Suggestions for improvement are not

the same as criticisms. Suggestions for improvement are welcomed and necessary.

B. Overcome with (2:20)

1. Trust in the God of Heaven who is not opposed to the work. Nehemiah was God centered.

2. Focus on building not on the opposition.

3. Do not cave or compromise. I read this week where leaders should shoot for being right

80% of the time and learn to live with being wrong 20% of the time. You are not going to

be right 100% of the time. You are not perfect leaders. Nor are your leaders perfect.