

Six Marks of Lay Leadership

Nehemiah 3

I read a small book many years ago on pastoring. The author said, “Most pastors are not overworked, they are under organized.” Many that is the way you feel about your life. I am overworked because I am underorganized. Nehemiah leadership in chapter three could help remedy that problem.

Nehemiah Three is not a Hebrew Phone Book of hard to pronounce names.

It is what OT scholar Howard F. Vos calls “an incredible feat of organization” (*Bible Study Commentary: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987, p. 96).

Nehemiah puts on his hard hat and gives us a guided tour of his work site: The reconstruction of 2 miles of the broken down walls of Jerusalem. He focuses on the ten gates that were under construction. The gates would be the first place enemies would enter the city.

Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem was not just a material building project; it was a spiritual accomplishment for the glory of God. Listen again to Nehemiah challenge God’s people just before the rebuilding began in 2:17-20. Jerusalem was the City of God. The walls down around God’s city was a reproach on God’s name.

Look at the map.

Nehemiah starts at the **North Wall** at the Sheep Gate and the Fish Gate in 3:1-5 and moves counter clockwise describing the 41 work stations.

Next he describes the **West Wall** in 3:6-13 with the Old Gate and the Valley Gate

The **South Wall** is next talked about in 3:14-27 and the Dung Gate and Fountain Gate.

Finally, Nehemiah completes his tour in 3:28-32 of the **East Wall** and the Water Gate, Horse Gate, East Gate, the Inspection Gate and then ending where he began with the Sheep Gate.

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)

I went to an AWANA Conference in Charlotte, NC and there 800 AWANA workers in attendance and only 10 pastors. Was that good or bad that there were only 10 pastors there? It was neither good nor bad. What would have been bad had there been 800 in attendance and only 10 AWANA workers. AWANA is a lay workers' ministry.

1. The Leader Divides the Work into Manageable Section

- A. The 2 mile wall was divided among 41 teams making what would have been humanly impossible task for a few people workable.
- B. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time
- C. When you do start studying for Final Exams?
- D. How do you read through Scripture in one year? You don't procrastinate unto December

2. The Leader Delegates Responsibility and Authority

- D. L. Moody, "I'd rather get ten men to do the job than to do the job of ten men."

- A. Delegate with to those with a Vested Interest (3:1)
- B. Delegate to secure Unity (3:2-5) "next unto him built" That statement or its equivalent is mentioned 28 times.
 - 1. There was a 2 mile unbroken circle of unity
 - 2. Some did not help (3:5). The nobles from Tekoa would "put not their necks to the work of their Lord." This expression is similar to Jeremiah 27:12 of oxen that refuse to pull together in the yoke.
 - 3. Therefore others had to do double duty (3:4, 27, 21, 30)
James Montgomery Boice said "the churches more than anything else resembles a football game played in a large stadium. There are eighty thousand spectators in the stands who badly need some exercise, and there are twenty-two men on the field who badly need a rest" (*Nehemiah*. Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990, p. 68).

- C. Delegate according to nobler interest (3:7). These workers from Tekoa, Gibeon, Mizpah did what was good for others more than themselves. If Jerusalem the capital falls to the

enemies their cities will also go down. Why should I support the youth, I don't have any young people participating. What about the next generation of leaders at Gospel Baptist?

D. Delegate according to abilities or in areas of giftedness (3:8-9)

1. Goldsmiths with soft hands for intricate work. Maybe they helped with the locks which were necessary to keep the enemies out (Enemies have already verbally attacked 2:19)

2. Apothecaries or perfume makers.

E. Delegate to all, including women and children (3:12).

F. Delegate to servants (3:13-14).

1. Delegate to those who are willing to serve in less than glamorous ministries and unnoticed by man (3:13-14). I don't want to ride on the back of the Garage Truck but

I'm glad somebody does.

2. Delegate to those willing to do mundane tasks (3:26). The Nethinims from Joshua 9 were water haulers. The people who make a first impression on our quests are our ushers and greeters. Not the choir or the pastor.

G. Delegate responsibility and authority. These 41 teams had 41 leaders. Apparently Nehemiah did not micromanage. Becky and I took a Concealed Weapons Class yesterday.

When I am out of town or state, I want her to be able to protect herself in case of a home

invasions. We start packing heat we will let you know. Our instructor was really good. He

did not demand we hold the pistol just like he held his. He also allowed us to make mistakes in the learning process. You shot at five, seven, and ten yards sometimes standing

still, bending down and moving toward the invader, and backing away stepping over objects. At our first practice at 5 yards one guy missed the entire target. Our instructor did

not panic. By the end of the day, that guy improved and passed.

Hans Finzel said, "I believe the 80/20 rule of success. Eighty percent of the time I'll make the right decision, and 20 percent of the time I will make mistakes or not do something as well as it could have been done. I allow my subordinates the freedom of the 80/20 rule as well and give them grace and room to fail" (*The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, p. 125).

3. The Leader Recognizes His/Her Workers

There are three kinds of material in Nehemiah

1. Narrative makes up 36%
2. Prayers make up 11 %
3. Lists of names make up 53%

A. Leaders give credit to others (75 individuals are named and recorded in Nehemiah). Nehemiah would have agreed with this statement, “Compliments by their very nature are highly biodegradable and tend to dissolve hours or days after we receive them---which is why we can always use another” (*The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, p. 63).

B. Leaders do not take credit for themselves.

1. Whose names is conspicuously absent in chapter three? Nehemiah
2. Luke in Acts records the spiritual success of the early church of which he is a great part. He never mentions his name.

Jim Collins in *Good to Great* analyzed 11 companies that went from good to great companies. Walgreens was a mediocre company for 40 years but took off in 1975 and outperformed all of its competitors. There was no one reason but a combination. They stopped doing what was hindering growth. Ten out of the 11 grew their own leaders to take over as the next leader. They did not bring in outside CEOs. They had CEOs who were humble. There no Lee Iacocca with big egos and personalities. Iacocca saved Chrysler from the brink of catastrophe “but in the second half of his tenure, Chrysler’s stock fell 31 percent behind the general market” (p. 29). Collins’ Level 5 leaders were “quiet, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, self-effacing” (p. 27) and willing to take the blame for mistakes and take no credit for successes.

C. Leaders give ultimate glory to God (6:16). Contrast this to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:30.

After Nebuchadnezzar had completed one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the city of Babylon with its hanging gardens, he boasted, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?”

