

The key qualities of a leader
(An outline of a sermon/ bible study)

F. W. 2-23-2019

Nehemiah Chapters 1-3

When you think of a leader, whom do you have in mind? What kind of qualities does he/she have? May be someone that is smart, or someone that is willing to do things that others would not, or someone that is influential- may be but do you think those are the most important qualities?

Today, we study Nehemiah chapters 1-3 on the topic of leadership. For background, the book of Nehemiah started in the Persian city of Susa in the year around 444 BC. Later that year, Nehemiah traveled to Israel, leading the third of three returns by the Jewish people following their seventy years of exile in Babylon. The previous two group of Jews returned to Jerusalem was described in Ezra. The Persian overpowered Babylonian about 538BC where the first group of Jews' return took place, and now about 100 years later the story of Nehemiah took place.

Old Testament often talked about kings, priest and prophets. Here, Nehemiah is a cupbearer to the king, a servant to the king. However, Nehemiah is a leader even though he is not a king, nor priest nor prophets.

1) A leader needs to be close to God and able to see what God see

In Nehemiah Chapter 1, it clearly shows Nehemiah was in sincere prayer with God. Only constant sincere prayer that is communication with God can bring one close to God.

Just hear about God's people and their situation is one thing but really feel the situation and its urgency is something different. Neh. 1:2-3 described about his brother and friend had informed him about the terrible situation the Jews encountered in Jerusalem. He wept (Neh. 1-4), and then he fasted and prayed to God. He saw the terrible and urgent Jerusalem situation just like God was seeing it.

Today, are you close to God and see what He sees? For example, do you see God's church needs your service and financial support? Another example is described in Nehemiah chapter 5 where he helped the poor. In Matt. 25:35-36, it says "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a

stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Jesus pointed out that people around you would need your help in God’s eye. Do you see these people in need?

2) A leader needs to be brave and have courage

As you read in Chapter 2 verses 1 to 3, the situation is that a leader can be afraid sometimes when the situation is tough. That is normal. However, a leader can break through that barrier quickly and act on the situation properly. He told the king his situation and asked for requests. He knows building the city wall is so important for his people and God. He also knows that his travel may not be easy since some people on the road path to Jerusalem might oppose the Jews (Neh. 2:7).

3) Win the trust and respect of others

In chapters 1 and 2, you can see that King Artaxerxes trusts Nehemiah. He was a cupbearer to the king (note, he can be the easiest person that can poison the king). Neh. 2:7-8, the king gave him his requests that show the king respects him and what he does. In chapter 3, the Jews in Jerusalem followed him. That shows he was trusted and respected. One more point is in Neh. 2:8 “...because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests”. He was not just thankful to the king but gave all the glory to God.

4) Good planning and dedicated for completion

He planned ahead. For example, he had two requests in Neh. 2:7-8. He knew his travel might not be smooth and he knew he needs material to build in Jerusalem. In chapter 3, he has a good method to delegate the work to different people to build the wall effectively and quickly. Otherwise, how can a big task can be completed in 52 days (Neh. 6:15).

In summary, a leader needs to be close to God, have courage, trusted by others, good planning and dedicated to completion. Above all, Nehemiah served others like a servant. **As stated in Mark 10:42-45, a most critical item for a leader is having a servant attitude.** You don’t have to be a king or a pastor; you can be a leader at home for the family, at work, at church or local committee. May God bless you!