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Nehemiah – Lessons on Christian Leadership

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Nehemiah Christian Leadership Summary

Nehemiah Lessons Learned

Introduction

Nehemiah saw a problem and he took action. He understood God's calling was to motivate the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. He left a responsible position in the Persian government to do what God wanted. He organized, managed, participated, encouraged, met opposition, confronted injustice, and kept going until the walls were rebuilt in just 52 days! Nehemiah was a man of action. He was a leader determined to be a person on whom God could depend to act for him in the world. Nehemiah is a powerful biblical case study on Christian leadership.

- Being a leader requires prayer, planning, courage, hard work and perseverance.
- In order to lead, we must listen for God's direction in our lives.
- Positive expectations are never a substitute for doing the difficult work.
- God uses each person in a unique way to accomplish his work.
- Seemingly impossible tasks can be accomplished when God is helping those who honor him.

Vital Statistics

Author:

Much of this person is written in the first person, suggesting Nehemiah as the author. Nehemiah probably wrote the book with Ezra serving as editor.

Setting:

Zerubbabel led the first return to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. In 458, Ezra led the second return. Finally, in 445, Nehemiah returned with the third group of exiles to rebuild the city walls.

Purpose:

Nehemiah is the last of the Old Testament historical books. It records the history of the third return to Jerusalem after captivity, telling how the walls were rebuilt and the people were renewed in their faith.

Date Written:

Approximately 445-432 B.C.

Chapter 1...Nehemiah's Prayer

Discussion Questions

1. When you are confronted with tragic news or an extremely challenging situation, what do you do?

2. What are 5 elements of effective prayer?

3. Nehemiah prayed for success. Is that ok? Why?

4. Leadership is influence. Is the story of Nehemiah applicable to everyone, regardless of position? If so, why?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders pray first when faced with a very difficult situation.
- Leaders use their knowledge, experience and organization to determine the proper course of action.
- Leaders pray for success. Not for personal success, but success for God's work.

Chapter 2 – Nehemiah to Jerusalem

Discussion Questions

1. Is there a task that you need to pursue, but fear is holding you back?

- “Feel the fear, but do it anyway (with God’s help)”

2. In your work, do you pray “emergency prayers? Have you earned the right through extended prayer?

3. Can you share an example of a situation where you lead or participated in a process of assessing, planning, choosing timing, sharing and inspiring?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders face their fear, and then do what they have to do.
- Leaders pray spontaneously.
- Leaders ask for help.
- Leaders acknowledge God as their source of power.
- Leaders expect opposition. They prepare for it, deal with it and move ahead.
- Leaders assess the situation quietly and thoughtfully.
- Leaders develop a realistic plan.
- Leaders present their plan with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Leaders encourage and inspire others into action to accomplish God’s goals.

Chapter 3 – Builders of the Wall

Discussion Questions

1. How do you deal with individuals that don't buy into an idea or a project, or refuse to work hard whether it is at work, church, civic, etc.?

2. List the benefits of having each person be responsible for the section of the wall closest to their homes and think through how that is applicable in your work.

3. Nehemiah did an excellent job of blending his self-interest with the group's objectives. List an example where this approach was used successfully or where it could have been used, but wasn't.

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders do the hard work, too.
- Leaders make sure that each person understands the importance and meaning of their role.

Chapter 4 – Opposition to the Rebuilding

Discussion Questions

1. Think about an example in your life at work where you were opposed and ridiculed by someone. How did you handle it? How would you handle it now?

2. Often in a large project or task, doubt, discouragement and fatigue will emerge. How do you combat that?

3. In this chapter Nehemiah had a *problem*, he created a *solution*, he provided *motivation* and he established *communication*. How can you do the same in your work?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders pray, and then refuse to be discouraged when faced with opposition and criticism.
- Leaders combine prayer with preparation and planning.
- Leaders understand problems, find solutions and then motivate others to act.
- When undertaking a large project, leaders cure fatigue and disappointment by focusing on God's purpose – their calling, their goal and God's protection.
- Leaders establish a process of open and honest communication.

Chapter 5 – Nehemiah Helps the Poor

Discussion Questions

1. Are there “poor” people being mistreated in your workplace? Can you help them rather than exploit them?

2. Rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem was Nehemiah’s purpose. He was the visionary and founder. He was the CEO. Did he spend his time at company headquarters? Or, did he get out “in the field” and do the work? How can you apply this lesson to your job?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders come to the aid of those who need help and cannot help themselves.
- Leaders stay focused on the work, not political or personal gain.
- Leaders get involved in the day to day work.
- Leaders set an example by what they do as well as what they say.

Chapter 6 – Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

Discussion Questions

1. Think of a situation where you had opposition, either internally or externally. How did you deal with that opposition? Would you do it different today?

2. Have you ever taken on a job or project that was incredibly large or daunting? How did you handle it? Did you complete the task/project?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders deal with competitive attacks on their character by praying for strength and trusting God to accomplish the task.
- Leaders don't always have full support. They must insure that they are doing what is right, and then ask God for strength and courage.

Chapter 7 – The Completion of the Wall

Discussion Questions

1. What are the top 3 traits or skills that you look for in selecting a leader?

2. When a major project is complete, what should we do next? Celebrate? Move on to the next priority?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders don't let the size of a task or the length of time needed to accomplish it keep them from doing it.
- Leaders chose other leaders based on integrity (trust) and faith in God (do what's right).
- Leaders know that the work is not complete when the project is complete. On-going maintenance and follow through is critical to preservation of the original goal.

Chapter 8 – Ezra Renews the Covenant

Discussion Questions

1. When you read the Bible, do you listen intently and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand it?

2. What were the roles of Nehemiah and Ezra? Why is Nehemiah's role so crucial and how does that apply in today's world?

3. Is it ok to celebrate the completion of a major project? How should you celebrate?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders view their work as God's calling to serve him.
- Leaders read the Bible, listen devoutly to what God is saying and determine a response.

Chapter 9 – The Israelites Confess Their Sins

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever made a mistake and covered it up, not admitting it to others or maybe even yourself? How should you handle that situation in the future?

2. Do you take time to reflect on your past at work and at home? Should you? Why?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders remember and learn from their past to improve their future.
- Leaders confess their sins and are not afraid to ask God for help with recurring challenges.
- Leaders always thank God for their successes.

Chapter 10 – The Agreement of the People

Discussion Questions

1. What were the six provisions of this agreement made between the people and God?

2. What was Nehemiah trying to accomplish with this binding agreement?

3. Have you ever considered writing a “binding agreement” for your team at work, for your family, for the sports team you coach?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders are willing to sign a binding agreement and get others to do so, as well.
- Leaders are willing to keep their promises in good times and bad.
- Leaders put God first in their work.

Chapter 11 – Nehemiah Establishes Policies

Discussion Questions

1. Name one time you had to make a serious sacrifice for the team or for God.

2. Have you ever experienced a situation where the “followers” would not follow? What was it? How did you handle it?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders are willing to make sacrifices.
- Leaders do not always have volunteers. Sometimes they must require participation.

Chapter 12 – Dedication of the Wall

Discussion Questions

1. The dedication of the wall was done with joy, praise and singing. What can you learn from this celebration that you can apply at work?
(see Celebration – Chapter 8:9-10)

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders celebrate.
- Leaders orchestrate the celebration.
- Leaders insure that God and the workers are praised.

Chapter 13 – Nehemiah’s Final Reforms

Discussion Questions

Wow...Nehemiah left Jerusalem to return to Babylon. While we don't know how long he was gone, his "management team" clearly reverted back to many bad habits, made many bad decisions and had Jerusalem headed in the wrong direction.

1. What, if anything, could Nehemiah have done better or different to ensure long term stability before his departure?

2. What do you think of his leadership approach when he returned?

3. What do you think of verses 14, 22, 31?

Christian Leadership Lessons

- Leaders exclude wrong doers.
- Leaders are willing to clean up a mess.
- Leaders are willing to issue severe punishment to those who do great wrongs.

Nehemiah Christian Leadership Summary

1. **Have a clear purpose and keep evaluating it in light of God's will**
– nothing prevented Nehemiah from staying on track.
2. **Be straight forward and honest**
– everyone knew exactly what Nehemiah needed, and he spoke the truth even when it made his goal harder to reach.
3. **Live above criticism**
– the accusations against Nehemiah were empty and false.
4. **Be a person of constant prayer**
– everything Nehemiah did glorified God. Derive power and wisdom from your conversations with God.

Nehemiah Learned There Is...

- no success without risk of failure.
- no reward without hard work.
- no opportunity without criticism.
- no true leadership without faith in God.