



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Leadership Series: Initiative. (Nehemiah Chapt. 1-6)

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Friendly Notice: We are testing a summer study format for leadership and staff. We meet in the Governor's Conference Room: Capitol 264 West at 7:30 AM Wednesdays. Come when you can get away and please share any input you have on this format.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us have taken seminars and management workshops on leadership. Some may have earned college majors, even degrees in leadership. Like most of those instructors, I taught classes which focused on knowledge and skills needed to lead people, projects, and programs. However, little attention is given to the attributes of successful leaders and the practices by which we gain such character traits. We will examine historic examples from Scripture.

ASKING GOD FOR FAVOR

Nehemiah 1:4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.¹

An apparent sibling of Nehemiah brought news of the distressful condition of the city of Jerusalem after some of the Hebrew people were allowed to return. After seventy years of captivity, King Cyrus funded the rebuilding of the temple (516 B.C.). However, the walls still had broken areas and the gates had been destroyed by fire. They were open to assault by their enemies and faced organized opposition in repairing the wall and gates. Nehemiah prayed over the next four months, reminding God of His attributes nation, children, and His servants (1:6). Nehemiah confessed the sins of Israel and his own sin (1:7). Nehemiah reminded God of His promise to return them to the land after they had repented and called out to Him (1:9). Nehemiah closed his prayers by asking for favor with the king (1:11). Consider that Nehemiah risked his life by asking King Artaxerxes to let him go and organize the rebuilding of Jerusalem. This was a bold move for a servant-cupbearer. Initiative must begin with prayer.

Nehemiah 2:4-5 The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."

Note that Nehemiah prayed even before answering the king's question. The king's only questions were: **"How long will your journey be and when will you return?"** (2:6). Nehemiah obviously had done extensive planning and was able to give the king a timetable. Next Nehemiah made a series of requests to ensure the success of his mission. He asked for letters to give to provincial governors, granting safe passage, giving him lumber, and providing protection. The king sent a detachment of mounted army officers along.

INITIATIVE DEMANDS STRATEGIC PLANNING

Nehemiah 2:11-12a I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem.

Nehemiah kept quiet about his mission until he surveyed the threats, reviewed the challenges, and learned who was trustworthy.

LEADERS MOTIVATE PEOPLE

Nehemiah 2:17b-18 Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

Nehemiah shared his vision, showed that God was with him in the work, and told of the support of the king. He was sincere, believable, optimistic, and serving in God's will. The people caught the vision.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEADER'S STUDY: WEDNESDAYS 7:30 AM, GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM 264 WEST

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LEADERS DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY

Nehemiah 3:12 Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.

Nehemiah was shrewd. He assigned people to work on the wall nearest their home, encouraging families to work together. He assigned local officials to work on the wall and gates in their neighborhood. Nehemiah personally knew the people². Dozens of names of workers are listed in chapter three. Nehemiah was not passive, he worked alongside the people. “We labored in the work” (4:21).

LEADERS ARE VIGILANT

Nehemiah 4:21-22 So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and as workers by day.”

There were over a dozen direct threats to the project. It was necessary to work, sleep, even bathed while holding a weapon. There were efforts to lure Nehemiah away to confound the workers, even take his life. He remained focused.

CONCLUSION

A leader uses good judgment! There may times when a calculated risk is necessary. But we do not gamble with our people.³ Like Nehemiah, we assess the risk and plan for contingencies. Exercising initiative requires greater judgment.

¹ The Holy Bible. New International Version. (Biblica). 1984. (This is the source of all Scripture references here).

² John MacArthur, Called to Lead. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). p25.

³ Ibid p28.