



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

God's Leader Series: NEHEMIAH

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King Solomon's son Rehoboam drove Israel to civil war his first year as king. Jehovah God, through His prophets, had been promising judgment for national sin, allowing first the northern kingdom (Israel) to be taken captive, later the southern kingdom (Judah). Much of the population was deported and scattered over distant lands. God chastened His people with seventy years of captivity in Babylon. During this time, Persia rose to world power, and Artaxerxes served as king. Nehemiah, one of the displaced Jews, served as cupbearer (poison checker) for the king. The Book of Nehemiah was written by his contemporary, Ezra, who served as scribe and priest in the royal court. This gave him access to the royal archives and Nehemiah's diaries.¹

INTRODUCTION

The year was 445BC, and Nehemiah was serving King Artaxerxes in Susa, a fortified city just north of the Persian Gulf. One of the brothers 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 had 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.

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."²

Nehemiah prayed over the next four months, repeating God's commitment to love the Hebrew 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). Do you sometimes pray about the condition of your own life, your family, the State of Kansas, or our Nation? We should ask the Lord for grace and mercy, reminding Him that He is Sovereign and able to give specific help.

MAKING A BOLD REQUEST

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."³

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. Such initiative must begin with prolonged prayer. Note that Nehemiah even whispered a quick prayer before answering the king's question. The king's only concerns 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. Emerging leaders should plan and prepare before asking permission to step out in a venture or an initiative.

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."⁴

Nehemiah kept quiet about his mission until he surveyed the threats, reviewed the challenges, and learned who was trustworthy. Test others' input against the mission!

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."⁵

BIBLE STUDIES

LEADERSHIP STUDY WEDNESDAYS: 7 TO 7:50AM, CAPITOL ROOM 142 SOUTH

STAFF/GUESTS: WEDNESDAYS: 12:05 TO 12:55 PM, GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM – CAPITOL 264WEST

Kansas

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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 and joined in the work!

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.⁶

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 people! 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."⁷

Petty leaders from the surrounding area saw their power diminished and were undoubtedly envious of this new leader in Jerusalem. They began with mockery and sarcasm. Then there were over a dozen direct threats to the project. It was necessary to work, sleep, even bathe while holding a weapon. There were efforts to lure Nehemiah away, to confound the workers, even take his life. He remained focused, giving us a model to follow!

SUMMARY

1). How to deal with opposition by scorn and disparagement:

Pray for the Lord's intervention (Nehemiah 4:4-5).

Ask God to bless those who despise you (Matthew 5:44).

2). How to deal with open attacks:

Pray against any spirits behind the attacks (Isaiah 54:17).
Act using appropriate shields and weapons. Examples include: data, legal maneuvers, testimony, and related tactics (Nehemiah 2:7) (Acts 16:37-38).

Fear not: avoid paralysis, keep encouraged, and inspire others (Nehemiah 4:14).

Set the pace: Leaders bubble with urgency, stimulating others (Nehemiah 2:17-20)

3). How to combat the opposition of internal disunity:
Set a personal example – waive your own rights, privileges, even sacrificing as you see team members doing (Nehemiah 5:14-19).

4). How to deal with subtlety:

Avoid attempts to stall the work by studying the issue, diverting energies to other useful or side efforts, protecting your own reputation at the expense of the work, and refusing to sin through fear of what man can do to you (Nehemiah 6:1-14).

The city wall had lain in rubble for nearly 100 years after the Jews returned. Nehemiah and his team rebuilt it in fifty three days!

CONCLUSION

A leader uses good judgment! There may be times when a calculated risk is necessary, but we do not gamble with the safety and well-being of our people. Like Nehemiah, we assess the risk and plan for contingencies. Exercising initiative requires the greatest judgment. Finally, give no place for attacks by Satan or other of your accusers. **Abstain from any appearance of evil** (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

¹ John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2005 p644.

² The Holy Bible, New International Version. (Biblica). 1984.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid