

6 Motivating Others Nehemiah 2:10-20

It is impossible to motivate other people.

Psychologist Ron Braund had the opportunity to conduct a team building training session with the University of Alabama football coaching staff in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The offensive and defensive coaches were in the conference room adjoining the office of the head coach.

During the introduction to the day's training, Braund made the following statement: "It is impossible for a coach to motivate his players to perform up to their potential."

The coaches looked up with an expression that said, "What in the world are you talking about?" After all, mounted on the wall behind him was a portrait of one of the greatest motivators in all of football coaching history, Paul "Bear" Bryant.

Braund went on to explain that for a football player to be motivated to play his best he needs to accept personal responsibility for taking specific actions—but it is also the responsibility of the coach to create an environment where those actions are likely to take place.

We cannot truly motivate others, but we can provide the best environment for others to be self-motivated.

He summed it up this way:

1. You cannot motivate other people
2. However, all people are motivated
3. People become motivated to action for their own reasons—not the reason others have for them.
4. The very best a motivator can do is create a healthy environment that allows others to motivate themselves to action.

This is what Nehemiah did. Nehemiah had a huge task before him. He needed to provide an environment where a downtrodden and discouraged people would be motivated themselves to join in the monumental task of rebuilding the

walls of Jerusalem--and this, in the face of opposition right off the bat.

¹⁰When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

Sanballat and Tobiah and their followers did NOT want anything to happen that might give the people in the area around Jerusalem any hope. So there was immediate opposition to what Nehemiah was about to try to do.

But Nehemiah knew that he would have to do some fact finding first so that when he approached the people of Jerusalem, he would know what he was talking about. He needed to make sure that he had credibility. He had planned to take a few days to figure things out and then address the people.

¹¹So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

So he privately went out to inspect the crumbled walls and assess all of the damage.

¹²Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode.

¹³And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire.

¹⁴Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass.

¹⁵So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.

¹⁶And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

Then in verses 17-18 Nehemiah summarizes one of the greatest motivational speeches. I wish we had more of this speech but Nehemiah does give us a short outline.

¹⁷Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach."

¹⁸And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's

words that he had spoken to me. So they said, “Let us rise up and build.” Then they set their hands to this good work.

He told the story behind his arrival. He probably explained the source of the stacks of timber that were arriving outside the city. He introduced the military guard the king had provided, as well as his own key staff.

But Nehemiah also told of God’s transforming work in his own life. And he told of how the king had been supportive of this endeavor as well. They needed to hear this since the last they heard was the decree years before by the same king to stop any and all work on the wall.

By telling the story of how God had worked, Nehemiah gave his fellow citizens an opportunity to jump on board with God’s work. He made clear the task at hand. But he also made clear the divine and earthly authority behind it.

And then he closed his speech with a huge challenge: “The condition of the walls of Jerusalem are a reflection of God and His people. We need to address this disgraceful condition. And we have the king’s permission and God’s promise and power to accomplish it.”

Notice the response of the people. “Let us rise up and build.” Nehemiah created an environment where these people were motivated themselves to begin working on this monumental task.

There are several things that stand out in Nehemiah’s approach and speech that could be modeled when providing an environment where others will be motivated to act.

APPLICATION

1. Clearly Identify and Define the Problem.

Nehemiah explained the problem quite well. The people had apparently become complacent as people will do. The walls were down. They were a disgrace. They needed rebuilding.

Even the obvious needs around people can become missed as they become desensitized with time. Nehemiah pointed out what should have been obvious and let the people say, “Yes, you’re right. The walls are down. They DO need fixing.”

Nehemiah helped the people come out of denial and spiritual complacency by stating the exact nature of the problem and its implications.

2. Propose a Solution (especially one that involves “We”)

Nehemiah didn’t talk about how important he was and how everyone ought to do what he said. Instead he said “we” can do this with God’s help.

Go back to the text and notice how often he used the words “we” and “us.” He said, “We’re in this together, guys. This is what God wants us to do.” The “we” automatically encourages others to participate.

3. Give a clear, strong challenge

Nehemiah didn’t try to manipulate. He didn’t complain about all of his sacrifices he had made for this trip and then tell people they needed to be like him. Instead, he issued a real challenge.

People are busy. They don’t respond to please our manipulation. They respond to a big challenge that is tied to a large, God-ordained vision. Many times we ask too little of people.

Nehemiah asked big things from people. He invited people to put their personal lives on hold in order to pursue God’s objectives.

Motivating Environment

1. Clearly Identify and Define the Problem.
2. Propose a Solution (especially one that involves “We”)
3. Give a clear, strong challenge

Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus did the same thing. He didn’t say to the first disciples, “Fellows, could you come part-time or help me a little when it fits in your schedule?”

Jesus hasn’t changed. He still asks us for a big commitment. The Bible clearly states...

1. **THE PROBLEM:** Everyone has sinned and deserves to be separated from God.

Romans 3

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6

²³For the wages of sin is death [separation from God],

2. **THE SOLUTION:** Jesus died as a sacrifice for us
Romans 5

⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

3. **THE CHALLENGE:** Deny self. Trust Jeuss. Follow Him.

Luke 9

²³... “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Step up to the challenge, Then go out and provide the environment for others to be motivated to do the same.

SENATE STUDY-Tue, 7:30am: Sen. Hancock’s office

HOUSE STUDY-Wed, 11:30/ Lunch Adjournment: Austin Club

CAPITOL COMMUNITY STUDY-Thu, Noon: Reagan Bldg

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