

An Example Of Leadership

Introduction. In Matthew 9:35-38, the problem that Jesus found among the Jews of His day is one of the major problems facing the church today -- a lack of leadership. In a day of mass communication, rapid changes, pressing problems, and tremendous opportunities, the church faces challenges no other generation has faced. In order to meet those challenges and fulfill the commission to take the gospel to everyone, we need dynamic and courageous leaders.

Elders, to be successful today, must plan and prepare. Elders and deacons must work, sacrifice, and give themselves totally to the tasks before them. When you take a look at some of the failures seen in the past, it is no wonder that churches have not grown as they should! I want to introduce you to a few types of so-called "elders" who hinder the work of local churches.

1. Frank Figurehead -- He has an official title, but he is a mere decoration. The church is dead because he shows no initiative. If someone does come into the church and shows some initiative this person is either branded as a troublemaker (always trying to start something), or else brother Figurehead just rubber-stamps what he does.
2. Don Dictator -- Brother Dictator enjoys being tyrannical and oppressive. He likes to issue orders and push people around. He makes it clear that no one dare "cross" him. The Dogmatic Drive church, where he attends, has split over a dozen different issues ... like whether to paint the rest rooms pink or purple.
3. Carl Compromiser -- Brother Compromiser is the complete antithesis of brother Dictator. He hates confrontation to the point that he will sacrifice principle. People cannot trust brother Compromiser because in a fight with error they never know when he will fold.
4. Paul Pressured -- Bro. Pressured was forced into the position and gave in because no one else would take it. He will never be of any value to the church -- he simply does not have enough interest. In time of conflict he is a pawn in the hands of those who can apply the most pressure.
5. Ned Negative -- No matter what proposal is made to get some work started, you can count on brother Negative to be against it. He can always give "101 reasons" ("We have done that before," "We have never done that before," "I do not think it will work," etc.) why something cannot or should not be done without ever helping to discover ways that good work might be done!

6. Pete Penny-Pincher. -- Brother Penny-Pincher's concept of church finances is to save the Lord as much money as he can. He thinks that "laying up treasure in heaven" is a large bank account saved up for a "rainy day." When it comes to the Lord's work, brother Penny-Pincher does not think in terms of work done and good accomplished, he thinks in terms of how much money is being spent. He goes beyond being a good steward -- he is a miser with no faith.
7. Howard Hypocrite -- Brother Hypocrite likes the position of leadership; it feeds his ego, but his life is in a shambles. He makes a claim to righteousness that people know is not genuine. He is a blight upon the church, and as long as he is in a position of leadership, the congregation will not be respected in the community!

As long as this type of leadership exists in local churches, they will never grow. In order to develop the kind of elders the church needs, we must look into scriptures for examples of leadership. We need to examine the characteristics that made these men effective and emulate them in our lives! This lesson will concentrate on the example of Nehemiah.

I. *Nehemiah Was A Man Who Felt A Burden*

- A. We need elders today who are not merely good decision makers, good stewards of the Lord's money, good peacemakers; we need elders who feel the burden to willingly and lovingly oversee the spiritual needs of the flock (Nehemiah 2:1-2; cf. 1 Peter 5:1-3).
- B. We need deacons, not merely men who hold a title, but men who feel the burden of responsibility as special servants of the people of God (Acts 6:1-4). They have an important, compassionate task, and they must be energetic in fulfilling it.
- C. Herein is the secret to leadership; herein is the secret to church growth -- someone has to feel the burden! It tore at the heart of Nehemiah for him to think of Jerusalem's walls still in shambles.

II. *Nehemiah Was A Man Of Vision*

- A. Nehemiah saw a Jerusalem with no walls, power, or pride (Nehemiah 2:3). He saw a Jerusalem with no present, future, or plan. There was no joy or purpose in the city. There was only a ragtag camp of broken refugees built on the rubble of past glory.
- B. But Nehemiah also saw another Jerusalem -- a clean, beautiful city surrounded by strong walls and filled with vibrant, proud people. He was convinced that he had received a divine commission to rebuild the walls of the ravaged ruins.
- C. It is not hard to find people who can tell you just how sorry a shape their church is in today. But what we really need are men who have

the vision to see the church as it can and should be (Revelation 2:9-10; 3:8-10).

III. ***Nehemiah Was A Man Who Prayed***

- A. Before he made his request known to the king, he prayed (Nehemiah 2:5). Here was a trying and turning point in Nehemiah's life. He felt the need and wanted God's help.
- B. God's men today are likewise men of prayer (Acts 4:31; 12:5; 16:25; 1 Timothy 2:8). Before decisions are made and important tasks undertaken, in those troubling and trying times of life, they need to spend much time with God in prayer.

IV. ***Nehemiah Was A Man Who Accepted Responsibility***

- A. Being a cupbearer to Artaxerxes, Nehemiah knew the burden of responsibility, yet he did not shirk it (like Jonah), nor did he want to substitute someone else (like Moses); he was ready to be sent and be used for God's greater glory (Nehemiah 2:5; cf. Isaiah 6:8).
- B. God's men today are those who are willing to accept the headache and heartbreak that personal responsibility brings and who sacrifice the time and energy to do what they know God's will for their life to be (Hebrews 13:17).

V. ***Nehemiah Was A Man With A Goal***

- A. It is not enough just to have vision, a good leader must be a man with a single mind (Nehemiah 2:17). Nehemiah set his goal to rebuild Jerusalem's walls and he worked diligently to accomplish it.
- B. How can a person know what he wants to accomplish in life unless he consciously thinks it out and sets goals? Specific goals gives one an aim, something to strive for, and something to feel good about when accomplished! Without goals, one's activity is, at best, aimless wandering. If you ever accomplish anything good, it will be merely by accident! Leaders need goals, and God's men today are those who set goals and work hard to attain them!

VI. ***Nehemiah Was A Man Of Encouragement***

- A. Nehemiah knew that he could not accomplish the work of God alone, yet the morale of the Jews was very low at this point (Nehemiah 2:17). They needed encouragement and Nehemiah gave it!
- B. God's leaders today must recognize that they cannot win the world for Christ alone -- they need help! Other people need to be encouraged to join hands in the work. "Come, let us rebuild" were the words of Nehemiah and they are a fitting admonition for us today (cf. Acts 11:22-23).

VII. ***Nehemiah Was A Man Unintimidated By Opposition***

- A. Sanballat and Tobiah tried their best to stop the work but to no avail (Nehemiah 2:19-20). Lesser men would have been intimidated by such formidable foes, but not Nehemiah.
- B. Opposition looms on every hand in our work for the Lord today, but we dare not be discouraged nor intimidated (Acts 4:15-20). We must continue to do what God commands and lead men in that direction if we want to please God!

Conclusion. I want to challenge qualified men to be Nehemiah's of the 20th century. God needs leaders, and you need to ask yourself, "It is the will of God in my life for me to be a Nehemiah?"

But, if there is one point more important than God needing men, it is that men need God. When Nehemiah prayed to God, he showed his utter dependence upon and need for God in his life. You have that same need!

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