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Leadership – what a challenge, what a calling! Nehemiah knew a fair bit about leadership, even if he didn't he demonstrated the characteristics of a great leader.

Let's take a peek at Nehemiah chapter 13 for more..

Faithful – God-Honouring

In verse 6 we read that Nehemiah had returned to Artaxerxes king of Babylon to continue his duties he had done before he was given permission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild. By returning to the King, it shows that Nehemiah was faithful to his word and he was prepared to delegate and leave others in charge of the city. Once his purposes had been fulfilled in rebuilding, Nehemiah returned but his heart was still in Jerusalem and eventually he got permission to go back. I also learn that Nehemiah was a servant, he got his hands dirty in rebuilding. He also empowered others and gave them opportunities. How many leaders need to learn this! Yes they messed up but Nehemiah took that risk.

Getting Rid of Evil

When Nehemiah he learned of the evil of others. The fact that he noticed their evil shows something about the relationship Nehemiah had God. His subsequent actions demonstrated that he honoured God, the temple and the holiness of God. The one who had been evil, Tobiah, had all of his goods thrown out of the temple. Nehemiah was decisive, open and didn't care much for reputations of the evil. No quiet 'can you leave please' Nehemiah knew Tobiah and his evil had to go.

Purity Before Blessing

Nehemiah restored the temple back to the standard that he had left in, under God's command. He ordered all of the rooms to be purified. What a lesson as a leader. Do we take time to purify all the rooms in God's Temple, our lives. How much junk is floating around inside us? Which rooms have been left un-purified in your life? Notice that the rooms were purified BEFORE the utensils and grain (the blessings) were returned to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Restoring Justice

Nehemiah found out the Levites had not been paid by the people as had been agreed. Nehemiah put an end to this. As leader we must make sure that people are cared for, that God's people are OK (Galatians 6.10). It is also our duty to see that injustice is fought, that reparation and forgiveness happens. What a lesson for us if we as leaders do not see that righteousness is done. In the case at Jerusalem, the Levites and singers had left the temple, forced to be employed elsewhere. If people aren't looked after in a church and supported and effectively led, they will go elsewhere!

Honest Men

The Levites and singers returned to the Temple with the return of Nehemiah and his enforcing of the people paying the Levites. He appointed Zadok, Pedaiah and Hanan in charge of the storerooms because 'everyone knew they were honest men.' God looks at

our character. As leaders we must look at the character of others before we help appoint them into leadership. I'd take character and experience over a Bible degree or even Youthwork degree any time.

God's Word Rules!

Nehemiah saw people trading on the Sabbath, against God's Word. When he saw this he openly challenged and argues with the important men of Judah. Not just anyone, Nehemiah realised to help others see sense and obey the Word, he had to stand up to the top dogs. (It reminds me of Paul confronting Peter, see Galatians 2.11) They wouldn't have thanked him for this, they were probably getting in some nice profits from their trading! A difficult thing for us is to confront when we need to. We must. Nehemiah used the experience of the people of Israel disobeying God and God pouring out his anger on them. The leaders would have known about this and it would have made an impression. Even if it didn't Nehemiah wasn't going to stand back!

Practical Action

He took practical action when he saw the trading probably wasn't going to stop despite his requests. He shut the doors of the city at sunset before Sabbath and they weren't opened until the day after the Sabbath. Nice one! We may also need to stop things, shut down activities if people are abusing them. We've shut our youth club before because of this, made young people pick up their litter, Soul Survivor even stopped their worship because the worship itself was coming before God. Respect. Nehemiah even warned off some traders who were taking liberties and trying to sell on the Sabbath. Cut off the sin completely before it infects.. The Apostle Paul also makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 5.

Be Holy as God is Holy

Ever wanted another good passage to support the Bible's teaching that believers should not go out with or marry non-believers (1 Corinthians 7)? Well, Nehemiah 13.23-29 is pretty cool. In fact it kind of amuses me too! Nehemiah saw that men of Judah were marrying non-Jews and having their children who were increasingly not speaking Jewish. He was both condemning and practical. He said don't marry foreigners and don't let the children marry foreign women either. Racist? No. It was to maintain the Jewish way of life. In our lives we must mirror this spiritually. Don't get too involved with non-believers, don't let the Temple of the Holy Spirit be made unclean. Look at the life of Joseph, his refusal to Potipher's wife and the way God ultimately rewarded his faithfulness.

Nehemiah ordered the people to stop. Notice that in verses 26 and 27, Nehemiah pointed out why he was saying this and the consequences. A lesson for leadership. Communication, communication, communication!

Delegation and Empowering

Nehemiah purified the people of everything that was foreign. He appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, giving each man his own job (and responsibility and respect). He made sure the temple duties were carried out and that the first fruits were brought.

One of the key tasks of leadership (like a seed in the ground) is to 'reproduce'. Good leadership always trains up, encourages and releases people into their destinies. Good leadership works with people to bring new life, new ideas and let people do what they're good at. Nehemiah did all of that - he put the right people in charge of the right things. If you're a leader do the same. If you're looking for a church, look for a church that is like this and where you can grow and bring your skills in the right time and right way.

Awe of God

Many times in Nehemiah, he says to God, 'remember me my God and be merciful (or kind to) me.' (for example Nehemiah 13.31). Was he arrogant? No. I believe he was probably quite lonely and had some tough decisions and action to make. He needed to make sure he was close to God, that God was with him and that he was doing the right thing. I believe he also feared God (in the positive sense of respect, awe etc.) He knew God is an awesome all-consuming holy fire and was interceding for himself and the people. What a lesson!