

## The Traits of a Godly Leader

Nehemiah 1: 1-4

*“Every believer is a minister or servant of God who should be serving God and exerting influence on others through his/her local church. Leadership is one person influencing positively another person. Christian leadership is one believer spiritually impacting others for God’s glory,”* Dr. Tim White. <sup>i</sup> Regardless of your status within the church, you have the ability to impact others for the good of the church and the glory of God. We all influence others – either in a positive way or a negative way, but our influence is inevitable.

It is evident that the modern church needs godly leaders. We need those who will rise to the occasion and use their spiritual gifts to influence others in a positive manner. When one considers leadership, there are an abundance of books and materials available for consideration. Of those, none are better than the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. It is a master class study in leadership.

Before we begin to examine the leadership principles recorded in Nehemiah, I want to take a moment to provide the backdrop for the environment in which Nehemiah lived and led others. Because of unrepentant rebellion, the people of Judah had been led captive to Babylon, beginning in 605 BC and Jerusalem was completely destroyed in 586 BC. However, they were not forsaken and God had promised a remnant would return. The return from captivity began with Zerubbabel in 538 BC. Zerubbabel quickly rebuilt the altar, restoring the sacrifices, and began to rebuild the Temple. It wasn’t long until the people met fierce opposition that greatly delayed the rebuilding efforts. In 516 BC, 22 years after their return, the Temple was restored and ready for worship.

The second group returned to Jerusalem about 80 years after the exodus of Zerubbabel’s group. In 458 BC Ezra led a smaller group of Jews back to Jerusalem. Ezra, the priest, had obtained permission from Artaxerxes, King of Persia, to return in order to seek spiritual reform and stir the hearts of the people in revival toward the Lord.

Nehemiah, the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes, returned to Jerusalem in 444 BC with a burden to restore the walls of the city. Nehemiah was not a priest or a prophet. He was a layman with a vision to accomplish a much-needed task for the Lord. Nehemiah’s endeavor reveals many biblical principles for successful, godly leadership. As we begin this series on godly leadership, I want to consider: [The Traits of a Godly Leader](#).

**I. A Person of Character** (1) – [The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace.](#) We find confirmation of Nehemiah’s position within the palace. Notice what we find in [V.11 – For I was the king’s cupbearer](#). Clearly, Nehemiah held a position of prominence. The cupbearer was charged with the responsibility of

ensuring that all the king ate or drank was safe and would bring no harm or illness. This is all the more significant when you consider that Nehemiah, being a Jew, was the cupbearer for a Persian king. Being near the king, and holding such an important position, Nehemiah would have been in a position to influence the king.

- Reputable character ought to be a visible trait for every believer, especially among those in places of leadership. Like Nehemiah, leaders must possess and show integrity and wisdom, being trustworthy. If one is to lead others, godly character must be shown and modeled for those who follow. [Titus 2:7-8 – In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,](#) <sup>8</sup> [Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.](#)

**II. A Person of Concern** (2) – [That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.](#) Keep in mind, Nehemiah is the cupbearer of the king, living within the palace. His position of prominence and influence would have been the envy of many. It would have been easy to have grown complacent and unconcerned about the needs of the Jews, but Nehemiah was genuinely concerned for their well-being. He inquired of how things were progressing in Jerusalem. He didn't allow his position or prosperity to cause him to lose concern for the people or diminish his desire for the things of God. Godly leaders will possess a concern for the needs of others.

- Currently, things are going well for us. We are blessed beyond measure and the Lord is working mightily among us, but we must not allow our blessings to create an attitude of apathy for those around us. All are not blessed as we are. Many are struggling just to maintain their faith. Some are questioning if there is any reason to press on in the journey. Others have yet to respond to the gospel in salvation. We need to be aware of the needs around us. We need to be stirred from our beds of ease and realize that our world is filled with darkness.

- I pray that God will renew our compassion and concern for the needs of those about us. Many churches are struggling; homes are facing division and strife; souls are lost and undone before God; some Christians are on the verge of giving up and abandoning the work of God. [Matt.9:36 – But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.](#) Godly leaders are people of concern.

**III. A Person of Courage** (3) – [And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.](#) As Nehemiah talked with his brothers, they shared a conversation that completely changed his life. Nehemiah inquired of the state of affairs in Jerusalem and his brothers were brutally honest – things were not good. The people suffered great affliction and reproach. The

work was being opposed on every hand and the wall of Jerusalem was in shambles. The pride of God's people had become a reproach. This difficult situation would require a leader of courage.

- You might wonder what significance that has for us today, but it reveals a profound truth. Many may be aware of the needs of our day, but few are willing to really acknowledge them, much less discuss them openly. We need to face the harsh realities of our day. The church is under great affliction. I hate to admit it, but she is also under great reproach. We have so conformed to the world that they see little, if any, difference. We have lost our power and our witness.
- We may be aware of the needs, but are we willing to admit them? Further still, are we willing to do anything about the great needs of our day? Are we willing to take an honest look at where we are spiritually and corporately as a congregation and make an accurate evaluation? Those who do will need courage and commitment.
- The needs and issues of our day don't need to be ignored or overlooked. That has been the case for far too long. We must admit our needs and begin an honest and beneficial dialogue about where we go from here. We must be honest about the state of affairs within our church, our community, and our nation as a whole. We must be honest about the real need for a positive Christian witness among the world. We need leaders who possess the courage to address the difficult situations of our day with a determination to lead effective change. [Acts 20:24 – But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.](#)

**IV. A Person of Conviction** (4) – [And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.](#) Nehemiah could no longer dwell in his ivory palace of ease while the people of God suffered. The conversation he had with his brothers stirred his heart and brought a compelling desire to serve the Lord and make a difference. He sought the Lord regarding what he should do about the current situation and desperate need of Jerusalem. Godly leaders are people of conviction and resolve.

- Nehemiah was so convicted of the great needs in Jerusalem that he wept over the condition of the city. Jesus also wept over the condition of Jerusalem centuries later. [Matthew 23:37-38 – O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!](#) <sup>38</sup> [Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.](#) What an example we find in the Scriptures of leaders being convicted and concerned for the needs of others. One cannot deny that our nation is morally corrupt and dying spiritually. Whether we like to admit it or not, much of the blame falls squarely upon the shoulders of the church. Our witness has fallen silent. The Spirit has been grieved and is no longer moving mightily in our midst. We need leaders with conviction to influence the current generation to turn from sin and unto the Lord.

- If we will be sensitive to the Word of God, we will experience conviction and a desire to move from our seats of complacency and comfort. We need to be broken over the current situation of our churches and society as a whole. We need to seek the Lord with a desire for His direction and power. We need to stand together united, committed to rebuilding the walls of our faith that have been assaulted and compromised for many years. We need to determine to proclaim the truth of God's Word at all costs and with every opportunity.

**Conclusion:** I hope you will agree with the need for godly leaders in our day. If you have influence over others, in any way, you are a leader. Are you the leader God desires you to be? Will we be the generation to rise up, work together, and rebuild after years of neglect and devastation? As I've said before, if not us, who; if not now, when; if not here, where?

If the Lord has spoken to your heart, why not come and seek His guidance and strength for the journey ahead. Nehemiah wasn't a priest or a prophet; he was an ordinary layman whom God placed in a position of influence and used in a mighty way. If you are yet unsaved, come to Christ in repentance of sin and faith in His finished work for salvation.

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<sup>i</sup> [Leadership in Nehemiah — Dr. Tim White \(drtimwhite.net\)](http://drtimwhite.net)