

The Influence of a Godly Leader

Nehemiah 2: 9-20

Can you imagine the excitement and anticipation that Nehemiah must've felt at this point in life? God had placed a great burden on his heart for the needs in Jerusalem. There was great devastation, a tremendous task to undertake. He was in a position of prominence, having obtained the blessing of the king, but now the real work would begin. Nehemiah had been granted the necessary credentials and resources, but he would need to influence and motivate the people to join him in this great task if the walls were to successfully be reconstructed.

Often these opportunities are hoped for and dreamed about, but many times they are never realized. We must remember that Nehemiah was not seeking a project of his own choosing. He was following the leadership and direction of the Lord. Like Nehemiah, we need godly leaders who will obediently follow the Lord's direction and actually engage in the Kingdom work. Understandably, the task is too great for an individual; successful leaders must be able to influence others to join them in the task God has given – effectively casting a vision that others will embrace and follow.

Our text today finds Nehemiah in Jerusalem, having made the long journey from the east. He will experience first-hand the devastation of the city and the determined opposition of those who do not desire the walls to be rebuilt. Nehemiah will have to evaluate the damage, form a plan for reconstruction, and deal with those determined to hinder his efforts. Godly leaders today face similar challenges, but must find a way to influence others to engage in ministry efforts. As we examine the [disciplines](#) of Nehemiah, I want to consider: [The Influence of a Godly Leader](#).

I. The Leader's Determination (9-11) – We find that Nehemiah had finally reached his destination. Scholars estimate the journey would have taken around three months, covering about 1,500 miles. The journey alone would have required great determination and commitment. However, the difficulty associated with travel in that day was not the only adversity Nehemiah faced. We find that Sanballat and Tobiah were greatly grieved that Nehemiah had come seeking the welfare of the Israelites, [V.10](#). These men, and others sympathetic to their cause, would create much trouble for Nehemiah. Clearly, just being committed to go to Jerusalem and beginning the rebuilding effort required great determination and resolve.

➤ In order to be successful in any effort for the Lord, leaders must be determined and committed to the work. Like Nehemiah, often there will be quite a journey to endure before the actual work begins. Leaders must be committed for the long-haul, determined to remain steadfast until the project is ready to begin and remaining diligent until it is complete. Abraham, Joseph, and Moses are just a few examples of those who needed determination to continue with the Lord. We too must be determined to complete the task the Lord has given.

➤ Leaders might as well expect opposition along the way. The enemy seeks every way possible to hinder and discourage the work of the Lord. The Lord never promised the task would be easy, but He did promise to be there with us each step of the way. Leaders cannot allow opposition and worldly resistance to prevent them from pursuing the work of the Lord. We must keep the faith, fight the good fight, and finish the course as Paul described.

II. The Leader's Preparation (12-16) – Nehemiah was well aware that the task before him would require much effort and preparation. He was also convinced that the work was a worthy task, one that he was determined to complete. In regard to Nehemiah's preparation, the text reveals:

A. An Enormous Task – Nehemiah set out one night to survey the city walls in order to get an idea of the enormity of the task at hand. That night, he traveled around the perimeter of the city walls, surveying almost two miles of wall that lay in ruin. The gates were burned with fire and there were places where the devastation was so great that the beast he rode was unable to get through the rubble. Clearly, much work would need to be done removing the rubble before the work of rebuilding the walls upon their foundations could begin.

➤ The task before us is enormous as well. We live in a world of over 8 billion people. A large percentage of those have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ – His death, burial, and resurrection for the salvation of mankind. As the church, the body of Christ, we are tasked with taking the gospel to the nations, to the uttermost parts of the earth. That is an enormous task. Effective godly leaders are aware of the enormity of the Great Commission and strive to prepare adequate strategies to reach the nations with the gospel. It is an enormous task, but nonetheless, it is ours to pursue. We need godly leaders who will prepare to pursue such a task.

B. An Ambitious Task – It is hard to imagine how Nehemiah might have felt as he surveyed the damage to the city walls for the first time. I would imagine it seemed a bit overwhelming to realize that he was responsible for rebuilding the walls in the midst of such devastation. However, Nehemiah did not abandon the effort once he became aware of the enormity of the work. He knew it would require much effort, but he was determined to begin rebuilding the walls and see the work through to completion. God had provided all he needed up to this point, and Nehemiah was determined to take on this ambitious task by faith.

➤ The world would have us believe that the gospel and the church are no longer relevant. It cannot be denied that many congregations are struggling and many people have no desire to hear or respond to the gospel. It is also true that many of those who have never heard the gospel live in countries and cultures that are very resistant to the gospel and Christianity. Some people groups in

our world have never had the gospel presented to them. We have an enormous task, but it is one that we cannot refuse. The cause of Christ needs godly leaders who will motivate and influence others to take the gospel to the nations. We need those like Nehemiah who will submit to the Lord's calling and trust Him, by faith, to provide the resources to complete the task. We need leaders who are ambitious enough to step out in faith and follow the Lord wherever He leads. [Eph.6:12-13 – For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.](#) ¹³ [Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.](#)

III. The Leader's Motivation (17-20) – Having surveyed the task at hand, Nehemiah knew he would need to motivate the people to commit to joining him in the rebuilding effort. The text reveals some details regarding Nehemiah's effort in motivating them to work. Notice:

A. His Honesty (17) – Nehemiah was very honest and straight-forward about the situation at hand and the enormity of the effort. He did not try to present a better situation than actually existed. He affirmed what they already knew – they were in distress, the city lay in ruin, and the gates were burned with fire. He challenged them to admit the great need and commit to doing something about the situation so they would no longer live in reproach.

➤ The task before us today requires leaders who are willing to be honest with those they lead. It will do the leader, nor his followers, any good to deny the truth of the current situation. We too face an enormous task. There is much work to be done. It will not be easy and there will be opposition. However, we as God's people have an obligation to serve at His leisure, being willing to surrender our lives to His will. Leaders must be honest about the current state of our church, communities, and world. They must adequately prepare those who follow for the great work ahead and the difficulties associated with that work.

B. His Adversity (19) – Here we discover the first encounter Nehemiah had with Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. They laughed at him, assuming he was foolish to even consider such an enormous task. Nehemiah was despised by these men and they sought to create fear within the heart of Nehemiah – “Will you rebel against the king?” Artaxerxes had signed a previous order that work on the wall must cease, [Ezra 4:17-23](#), and these sought to create doubt in Nehemiah's heart. They wanted Nehemiah to fear someone might relay to the king that he was acting in open rebellion.

➤ This was Nehemiah's first encounter with Sanballat and his cohorts, but it would not be his last. They would continually and actively oppose the work of Nehemiah and the Jews through fear, intimidation, and personal attacks. Nehemiah would have to learn to lead the people in the face of

continued opposition. Unfortunately, the same is true for leaders today. If you want to be a godly leader, influencing others and striving to advance the Kingdom, you might as well expect opposition. [John 15:19-20](#) – *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* ²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. Godly leaders must learn to overcome adversity and equip others to continue in spite of opposition.

C. His Guarantee (18, 20) – Nehemiah encouraged the people to join him in this noble task by sharing how the Lord had provided for him and how God had moved the heart of the king to support the work. He assured the people that God had promised and He would provide. This encouraged them to rise up, strengthen their hands, and build. Nehemiah also assured Sanballat and the others that God would prosper their work, regardless of outside opposition. The task was great, but Nehemiah knew his God was greater. God had called and He would provide for the work to be completed.

➤ Godly leaders are aware of the good hand of God and trust solely in His provision for the task in which they are engaged. God chooses to use human vessels, but ultimately, He is the one who accomplishes the work through those who submit to Him. He is the Vine and we are the branches. We can do nothing apart from Him, but in Him we can produce much fruit! Godly leaders must not lose sight of their dependence upon the Lord. He has called and He will provide!

Conclusion: Again, we have considered another portion of Scripture that provides detailed instruction for those who seek to influence others in Kingdom work. Are you a godly leader? Are you determined to complete the task? Are you praying and seeking God's wisdom in preparation for the task God has called you to engage? Are you motivating and leading others to join you in this task? Seek the Lord for the needs you have today.

I am also reminded of the greater narrative in Scripture and how all of this fits into that narrative. God had promised that the King would come to Jerusalem, bringing salvation. The Lord Jesus fulfilled this promise, riding on a donkey into Jerusalem as the people threw palm branches before Him, declaring Hosana: Blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the name of the Lord. Nehemiah was used of the Lord to help prepare the way for Christ the King to come and fulfill redemption's plan. Do you know Christ as your personal Savior? If not, I urge you to come in repentance and faith in His finished work for your salvation!