



"The Making of a Leader" (Nehemiah 1:1-11)

I. INTRO

- A. Vince Lombardi was the head coach of the Green Bay Packers during the 1960s, where he led the team to three NFL championships and to victories in Super Bowls I and II (1967 and 1968). Two stories...
1. After the second championship he went out with his players and partied for a while. When he returned home he got in bed and his feet brushed against his wife's legs and she said, "God, you're feet are cold!" To which he replied, "Sweetheart, when we're in bed you can call me Vincent." ☺
 2. The second story gives us insight into the genius of his coaching success. It could be the ONE THING that made the biggest difference...
 - a. Every August his players would gather to prepare for the upcoming season. (It was traditionally called "Hell Week" because it was two-a-day practices plus meetings related to the players positions.) On the first day of practice each year Lombardi would gather all the players on the field and he would hold up a football and he would say, "Gentlemen, THIS is a football."
 - b. Every year Lombardi and the GB Packers would go back to the basics, the fundamentals of the game. Lombardi knew that if his players were consistent in the basics of their position, that they would be a very good team.
- B. What we see in Nehemiah is that he seems to have worked on and acquired the basics, or fundamentals; of a strong leader.
- C. The definition that we will be using for leadership is THE most basic definition, which defines *leadership* as *influence*.¹ So with this basic definition of leadership it is safe to assume that WE ALL aspire to leadership in our relational spheres of influence (i.e., those you interact with consistently).

¹ <http://www.forbes.com/2011/01/03/influence-persuasion-cooperation-leadership-managing-ccl.html>
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- D. Today we are going to take a look at Nehemiah 1:1-11 to consider the Making of a Leader. We will look at the **basic skills and characteristics** that were present in Nehemiah's life that formed the foundation for his dynamic leadership role in Jerusalem.
- E. I will read the first chapter of Nehemiah, pray, and then we'll jump in... *"Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, ² that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. ³ And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." [Nehemiah's Prayer] ⁴ As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples,⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.' Now I was cupbearer to the king." –Nehemiah 1:1-11*

II. BODY

- A. Professor Bobby Clinton, who studied and taught leadership at Fuller Seminary for 30+ years, found that there are specific stages in the development of an effective leader. He studied leaders in the Bible as well as contemporary and historic leaders of the Christian faith. Here are the stages (check out the Pastor's Blog to see a more complete description):

1. **Sovereign foundations** – God providentially works to lay the foundations of the leader's life through family, environment, and historical events.
 2. **Inner-Life Growth** – The leader comes to know God in a more intimate, personal way -- and is tested...
 3. **Ministry Maturing** – The emerging leader reaches out to others, experimenting with spiritual giftings, and may seek training.
 - a. This, by the way, is one of the most crucial tasks and calling of the Church.
 - b. "In these first three phases, God's work is primarily IN the leader, not THROUGH him or her. Many emerging leaders do not recognize this, and become frustrated. They are constantly evaluating productivity and activities, while God is quietly evaluating their leadership potential. [God] wants to teach us that we minister out of what we are." --Bobby Clinton ²
 4. **Life Maturing** – The leader identifies and uses his or her spiritual gifts in satisfying ministry. Priorities are clearer for identifying the best use of giftings, what to do and not to do, resulting in a maturing fruitfulness. The key to development in **this** phase is a positive response to the experiences God ordains.
 5. **Convergence** – God maximizes the leader's ministry by moving him or her into a role that matches one's gift-mix and experience and that is comparatively freed from less suited activities. Convergence happens as one responds consistently to God's work in his or her life.
 6. **Afterglow or Celebration** (for only a few) - Their consistent track record in following God causes others to seek out their storehouse of wisdom. (Billy Graham and J.I. Packer come to mind...)
- B. Bobby Clinton says: "As a leader, you should recognize that God is continually developing you over a lifetime. [We can actually construct a timeline to identify these stages] God's top priority is to conform you to the image of Christ for ministry with spiritual authority. Enduring fruitfulness flows out of being [not doing]. In addition to transforming your character, God will increase your capacity to influence through developing your spiritual gift[ings]." --Bobby Clinton ³

² Bobby Clinton. *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, NavPress, 2nd edition 2012: 45-46.

³ *Ibid*: 54.

C. Now let's take a look at 8 leadership characteristics and qualities of leadership that Nehemiah displayed IN PREPERATION for his leadership role in Jerusalem:

1. **V 2 -- Nehemiah initiated, inquired, and listened.** Good leaders listen (well) before talking (not explicit in the text...).
 - a. *"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."* --James 1:19
 - b. There was an article in Forbes Magazine a couple of years ago titled, "Why Most Leaders Need to Shut Up and Listen"
 - c. "Active listening" involves (at least) 3 skills:
 - 1) Without interrupting, **reflect back** to the person what you heard. We do not have to agree with the other person to accurately reflect back what we think we heard.
 - 2) Pay attention to your **body language**. 55% of communication is body language, 38% is the tone of voice, and 7% is the actual words spoken.
 - 3) **Don't mind-read or jump to conclusions** regarding the motive of the person or what the person believes or is thinking.
2. **V. 4 -- Nehemiah felt deeply and wept.** Nehemiah was emotionally healthy and he was willing to see the world as it really is. He allowed pain and heart-ache to touch his soul. He was willing to leave the comfort and opulence of the palace to enter the brokenness of the people.
 - a. The shortest verse in the Bible is: *"Jesus wept."* --John 11:35
 - b. *"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; do not be silent at my tears; for I am a stranger with You..."* --Psalms 39:12 (NASB)
3. **V. 4 -- Nehemiah mourned (for days).** We are to mourn over our own sin as well as the broken state of our world.
 - a. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* --Matthew 5:4
 - b. I would like to remind you that when we studied the SOTM and the Beatitudes we discovered that being in touch with our spiritual poverty and mourning over our own sins and the brokenness of the world around us is actually the unlikely route to joy. Living in emotional reality. This is what Nehemiah was doing.

- c. A synonym for the word *mourn* is *lament*.
 - 1) There is a book in the Bible named Lamentations, which, in 5 poems, focuses on the suffering of Judah, Jerusalem, and the Jews at the hands of the Babylonians.
 - 2) Lamentations is a confronting book, showing us the seriousness of sin and rebellion against God. It spares no detail in revealing the awful consequences of sin. Nehemiah was undoubtedly familiar with the contents.
- 4. **V. 4 -- Nehemiah fasted.**
 - a. *"I humbled my soul with fasting"* --Ps 35:13b (NASB)
 - b. When we humble our soul (intellect, will, and emotions) the things of the Spirit can arise afresh.
 - c. It is one of the ways to gain God's clarity for our lives. (Another all church fast coming up – Feb 8-11)
- 5. **Vs. 4, 11 -- Nehemiah prayed.** Next week we will go into more detail about the prayer life of an influencer or leader.
 - a. Here's what I can tell you: Prayer is not as much about trying to get God to do what we think He should do, as it is about changing our hearts (through wrestling?) to want what God wants.
 - b. We are launching a prayer initiative today...
- 6. **Vs. 6b-c, 7 – Nehemiah confessed.** He took responsibility for his own sins as well as the sins of those who went before him.
 - a. Look again at what Nehemiah says: *"...Confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses."* --Nehemiah 1:6-7 (NASB)
 - b. Nehemiah took responsibility for and confessed his own sins as well as the sins of those who went before him.
 - c. Next week in the context of examining a leader's prayer life we will consider some specific ways the 21st Church has been more affected BY the culture rather than affecting the culture around us.
- 7. **Vs. 8-10 – Nehemiah's knew the Bible (Torah).**

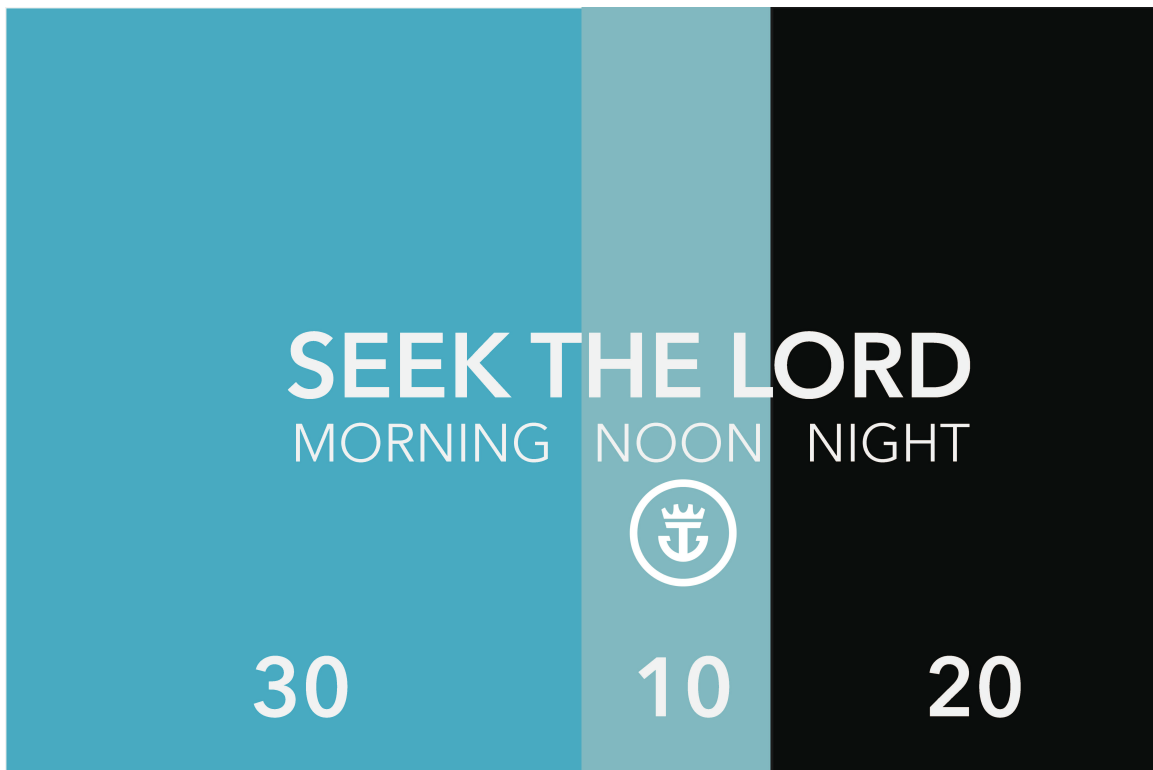
- a. The strength of Nehemiah's character was forged in his study of God's Word.⁴
 - b. Nehemiah knew he could count on God to hear and answer his prayers because he knew from his studies what God had promised to do.
 - c. We will also see throughout the book that Nehemiah's confidence and leadership capacity grew (even with significant opposition) through his study and understanding of God's Word.
8. **V. 11 – Nehemiah needed a demonstrated integrity to be appointed by the king to be the cupbearer.**
- a. Nehemiah was a busy guy. This means he had to go to great lengths to ensure that none of the food and beverages coming into the palace were poisoned – AND that all of the food and beverage prepares were vetted.
 - b. We can assume that, because of his role in the palace that he had access to capable leaders and also acquired some managerial experience.
 - c. Such a position would require a demonstrated integrity (over time), trustworthiness of character, and, probably a winsome and engaging personality since he was constantly in the king's presence.⁵
- D. What we see in Nehemiah is that he shows us both the gospel and the calling of the Church...
- 1. Nehemiah is a picture of Jesus and the gospel in that he was willing to leave the comfort and opulence of the palace in order to join the brokenness of the city and the people. This shows us Jesus who was willing to leave the comfort and perfection of heaven to join the brokenness of humanity in order to die for our sins and restore a relationship with the Father that had been ravaged by sin.
 - 2. Nehemiah is also a picture of the Church that is willing to see the world as it really is, letting it break our collective heart, and then proclaiming the gospel in deed and word. Loving God supremely and people completely.
- E. Two final reflections of effective leadership:

⁴ James Hamilton Jr. *Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Ezra and Nehemiah*, Holman Ref 2014: 98.

⁵ Adapted from *The Principles and Practice of Spiritual Leadership* by Andrea Buczynski, CruPres 2012.

1. "Leadership is helping a community [or organization, or family] face their problems, and then mobilizing and acquiring resources to help them solve their problems." --Dr. Alice Matthews
2. "[God] chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds;⁷¹ from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance.⁷² So he shepherded them according to the **integrity of his heart** and guided them with his **skillful hands**." --Psalms 78:70-72 (NASB)

III. CONCLUSION



30 minutes in the morning / 10 minutes at lunch (or commute) / 20 minutes at night
Commit through Easter? About 60 days...



SEEK THE LORD

MORNING NOON AND NIGHT
January 23 - March 13

At Kings' Harbor Church, we desire to be a praying community who consistently, faithfully, and fervently calls out to God in prayer. We believe that God chooses to intervene and work in response to the prayers of his people, both individually and collectively.

As we study Nehemiah, we as a church body are going to model Nehemiah's prayer life by seeking the Lord morning, noon and night. Join us as we commit to being in the word and prayer everyday for 30 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes in the afternoon and 20 minutes at night.

Each week we will publish corporate prayer points through our weekend bulletin, e-news and social media. We will also be challenging you to seek God for five people within your sphere of influence that you can invite to church between now and our Easter services. Easter invitations will be available beginning February 27th.

All Church Fast February 8-11th

Breaking of the Fast | February 11th 6:30-8:30pm
Soup and Bread and an extended time of worship

P.A.S.S. Questions For KHC Life Group Leaders

Sermon Dates: Jan 23-24, 2016

Sermon Title: The Making of a Leader

Sermon Passage: Nehemiah 1:1-11

P - Participation (get everyone involved in the dialog)

1. What person in your life has had the most positive influence on you – and what characteristics or qualities made the biggest impression on you?

A - Application (makes it personal)

2. Would those in your sphere of influence (i.e., those you interact with regularly) describe you as a good listener? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think listening is so important to good leadership (or influence)?
4. What are some things you could do to serve or appreciate those in your sphere of influence who are not active in their faith as a Christian?

S - Scripture (thinking biblically is a learned behavior! :-)

5. Of the eight leadership qualities listed in the sermon, which one challenges you the most?

S – Sharing (aim for a time of honest reflection, authenticity, and transparency in a safe atmosphere modeled by you). [Choose one of the following as a final dialogue question.]

6. Read Jeremiah 29:7. What are the greatest needs that you see in the South Bay?
7. Are there some ways for your Life Group to “seek the welfare of the city” together a few times a year?