

8 Qualities We Need in Today's Leaders

Five years ago, I had a birthday with a zero in it—and it scared me! But instead of fighting the aging process, I made an important decision: From now on, regardless of what else I do, my main priority is to **mentor** the next generation. That's why I spend a lot of my time investing my time in young leaders.

There are some great resources on the market today about discipleship, but one of my favorites has been around a long time: the book of Nehemiah. I find in his story the best leadership principles recorded anywhere. And I love to share these with anyone who feels called to build something for God.

At a time when many Christian leaders today are failing, we need to reclaim these eight vital qualities:

1. You must have a sure calling. Nehemiah said to the king: “*Send me* to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it” (Neh. 2:5, NASB, emphasis added). Nehemiah was a “sent one.” He was called by God, and he surrendered. You must be convinced that you are called. You may have great preaching skills, a powerful anointing or a magnetic personality, but human abilities and God-given talents alone will not make you successful. You must know that you know that you know that God has sent you.

2. You need a heavenly burden. When Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem's walls were destroyed and that the Jews were displaced, he wept (1:4). His call to **leadership** flowed out of true compassion for people. The most successful leaders step into their assignments not because they want to make a name for themselves or because they want a paycheck from a church,

but because they want to help others. If love is not your motivation, do us all a favor and wait until God's compassion grips you. The church today does not need any more leaders with personal agendas or selfish ambitions.

3. Your life must be saturated in prayer. The book of Nehemiah begins and ends with a prayer—reminding us that any successful leader must live a life of intercession if he wants to build successfully. Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Prayer has become as essential to me as the heaving of my lungs and the beating of my pulse.” Phrases such as “So I prayed ...” or “But we prayed ...” (2:4; 4:9) are inserted often in Nehemiah's narrative. Any successful leader will experience the same rhythm of heartfelt prayers and joyful answers.

4. You must be a team player. Nehemiah was consumed by a great vision, but he did not attempt it alone. He went to the people and said, “Come, let *us* rebuild” (2:17, emphasis added). He was also willing for the members of his team to get credit. About 40 key men and women who repaired the gates and walls of the city are mentioned in the third chapter. Like the apostle Paul—who bragged incessantly about his co-workers—Nehemiah was not afraid to share the spotlight. You must make a habit of empowering and praising the people God has called to serve with you.

5. You must be humble. The governors prior to Nehemiah were oppressive and greedy. They demanded feasts and royal treatment, but Nehemiah set a new example by living frugally (5:14-19). Leaders today must reject the attitude of **entitlement** that has been practiced by many of our predecessors who thought Christian leadership was about limousines, tailored suits and luxury accommodations. Nehemiah set a new trend when he said, “I did not demand the governor's food allowance” (5:18). Let's model servanthood.

6. You must have a practical plan. When the king asked Nehemiah what he wanted to do about Jerusalem, he didn't

hesitate to whip out his blueprint. He needed money, specific building supplies and official letters of authorization. And when Nehemiah got to Jerusalem, he did a detailed assessment of the damages. He knew how much work was required. If God has called you to build a church, a ministry or a business, a heavenly burden isn't enough. Count the cost, make a budget and plan your steps.

7. You must be a fighter. As soon as Nehemiah set foot on Jerusalem's soil, Sanballat and Tobiah began their demonic campaign to stop him. When you volunteer for any spiritual assignment, you automatically become a target. If you want a life without trials, difficulties and spiritual warfare, don't attempt something big for God. The warfare was so intense for Nehemiah that the people had to carry swords in one hand and tools in the other (4:15-17). Good leaders are multitaskers: They know how to fight and build at the same time.

8. You must be committed to God's Word. Nehemiah 8:4 is the only reference in the Bible to a pulpit—and it was built so that the regathered Jews could hear God's Word read aloud in the restored city. Good leaders give the Word the platform it deserves—and they don't rewrite the message to fit their culture or distract people from the Word with religious sideshows. Always make God's truth the main event—and discipleship your primary mandate.

God, give us leaders like Nehemiah! In this crazy season of apostate denominations, backslidden preachers and clueless Christians, let's commit ourselves to build God's way.

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