

We Are in This Together

But now I said to them, "You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!"

Nehemiah 2:17

Did you notice the words *we* and *us* in this verse? In order to motivate the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, Nehemiah had to identify with their problem, their need, and their future. It was no longer *their* problem. Now Nehemiah saw the broken wall as *our* problem. Imagine the kind of response Nehemiah would have received if he had said, "You folks have gotten yourselves into a bad mess. You know what you need to do? You need to rebuild that wall. If you need me, I'll be in my office. After all, I wasn't part of the problem. You people will have to get it on and do the work. Let me know how it turns out."

Identifying with the problem encourages motivation.

When Lee Iacocca became chairman and CEO of Chrysler at the height of the auto giant's problems in 1979, he knew he would have to ask employees to take a pay cut to keep the company out of bankruptcy. Although he persuaded Congress to guarantee the company loans, he was still deeply distrusted by Chrysler's union members. He knew that he had to find a way to persuade these workers that he had Chrysler's best interests at heart.

Iacocca called a meeting of key management and union executives. He announced that for the next year his salary would be \$1. The gambit worked. By sacrificing his own salary, Iacocca proved that he placed the welfare of the company over personal gain.

He identified with the workers. He was saying, "We are in this together. And, together we can make it through." He knew that people will accept a lot of pain when everybody is going through the trial together. If the followers know that the leader's in with them, together they can move a mountain or, in Nehemiah's case, build a wall.

In what ways can you identify with the people you lead? How can you say to them, "We are in this together?"