

”Do something wonderful, people may imitate it.”

- Albert Schweitzer

**Today’s Bible Verses:**

Nehemiah 7:1-73

**Today’s Theme:**

We will discuss in this lesson, what are the seven principles of highly effective leaders according to Nehemiah 7:1-73. Here is the layout we will follow, including the verses where you will find these principles.

The seven principles of highly effective leaders are…

I. PRIORITY (vs. 1)

II. PERMUTATION (vs. 2-3)

III. POTENTIAL (vs. 4)

IV. PRAYER (vs. 5a)

V. PRESERVATION (vs. 5b-60)

VI. PURITY (vs. 61-65)

VII. PARADIGM (vs. 66-73)

**Bible Translation Used For This Lesson**:

New International Version

**Introduction:**

At one time Andrew Carnegie was the wealthiest man in America. He came to the Land of Freedom from his native Scotland when he was only a young lad and did a variety of odd jobs that prepared him to eventually end up as the largest steel manufacturer in the United States. At one point, during his leadership, he had forty-three millionaires working for him. In those days a millionaire was a rare person; conservatively speaking, a million dollars in his day would be equivalent to at least twenty million dollars today.

A reporter once asked Carnegie, “How in the world did you hire 43 millionaires?” Carnegie responded that those men had not been millionaires when they first started working for him but had become millionaires as a result.

The reporter's next question was, "How did you develop these men to becomes so valuable that you have paid them this much money?" Carnegie replied with great wisdom, “Men are developed the same way gold is mined. When gold is mined, several tons of dirt must be removed to get an ounce of gold; but one doesn't go into the mine looking for dirt; one goes in looking for the gold.”

What are the characteristics you appreciate in a leader?

I think it is fair to say that we hunger for our commanders to have the kind of wisdom displayed here by Mr. Carnegie. Our leaders not only need a vision but a confidence towards their followers that will encourage them to rise up, shake off the dirt and be seen as gold.

As we begin our expedition through the seventh chapter of Nehemiah, we can pull out our chisel-tipped hammers and start chipping away at the verses to reach our gold. Although, the gold that will surface in the lesson today, is not in regards to the gold found in the ones following the leader. It’s the precious stone that emerges from the ones who lead!

**Quick Review:**

In chapter six, we see that Nehemiah has led the people victoriously with the task at hand. In only 52 days, during the heat of summer, and in spite of intense opposition, the calling of rebuilding and connecting the wall has been triumphantly completed. The accomplishment of restoring Jerusalem’s wall is a magnificent and unforgettable achievement that is still being talked about today. It was such a big production that God hand selected this specific story and gave Nehemiah his own personal section in a one-of-a-kind book that has been elevated to rank number one across the world for centuries. Obviously we see that Nehemiah has been uniquely used. Yet, God is not done with Nehemiah. He is still a good work that God is finishing.

As we begin to read the scriptures in chapter seven, lets observe what type of leader Nehemiah is and inviting us to become. When others would crumble, Nehemiah stood strong. When others might be frightened and given up, Nehemiah found strength and encouragement.

**FIRST Principle of a Highly Effective Leader (vs.1): Priority**

Nehemiah 7:1- *“After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed.”*

In this first verse, Nehemiah establishes three priorities.

1. **There was a physical need for protection**

Nehemiah realized that there was a need of regular supervision of the city’s main entrances. These entrances would need to have guards and watchmen so the enemy could not come in. Later in this book, we will see that these guards will be entrusted with moral responsibilities as well. They will be asked to keep the gates closed on the Shabat (Sabbath). The physical protection will also include a moral protection for the nation.

**Life Application**:

Several years ago my children and I came home to what appeared to either be a misplaced black rope laying on the ground, or a snake. You can imagine the kind of mother I am by convincing my ten year old go and check it out, while I stayed back safe and sound. The “eeeeeek” that came forth out of my daughter’s mouth, assured me of my greatest fear! There is a wild snake in my house and of course the guard of our walls (husband) has left his post and is nowhere to be found (at the office). As I dramatically ran around in a circle with my hands in the air, screaming. My children followed their leader and did the same. After a few minutes of getting nowhere with this behavior, I decided to pull myself together (a little bit) and try to come up with a plan.

“I know!” I screamed.

“Go get Brian, the next door neighbor!” I had to remain with my eye on the snake to make sure he didn’t slither his way into a hiding place. In all actuality, I was the one who wanted to go hide. My daughter returns and says, “Brian was too scared so he sent his wife, Renee!” The next thing I know, Renee comes in with a stick to save the day! With her mighty hero mask and cape on, she appears to have the answer.

“Hurry get me a box!” She exclaims with confidence, as if she had done this before. “I’m going to use this stick to maneuver the snake into the box.” My eyes got as big as saucers, and my heart was racing or more like pounding! I watch her gently tap the snake, which now has taken on the size of a boa constrictor.

As soon as she touches the serpent, he quickly maneuvers his body through a crack and behind my dishwasher. Renee looks at me and says, “Oops, sorry.” Then she leaves. You can imagine the fear that washed over my body! I called my husband and demanded him to come home! When he finally arrived, I told him that unless he sends me a picture of a captured snake, he could forget the thought of me ever coming home. About an hour after I had left, my phone beeps and this is what I see…



I can surely relate to the physical need of protection around my walls from the “serpent.” Where was my guard when I needed him? At least he eventually came to the rescue.

I wonder how many people listening to this lesson currently have a snake (the devil) inside their walls and don’t even know it? Their walls are down, with no one to guard and that serpent just snuck his way right in.

Nehemiah was no fool. He knew what was PRIORITY, which was why he appointed guards and watchmen to keep the enemy out.

The second priority Nehemiah establishes in chapter seven, verse one is…

2**.) There was a spiritual need of worship**

Nehemiah appointed singers to lead in worship. You see he understood that there is more to life than work and money. It was on the heart of Nehemiah that Jerusalem had God as its priority. He understood that worship keeps the personal life balanced. It is through worship that we reflect on the meaning of life. It is in worship that we gain confidence in our faith and the assurance of forgiveness.

We need the singers, because without worship, we are reduced to the values of the godless, and we will once again become a city without walls.

Lastly the third priority listed in Nehemiah 7:1…

3. **There was an intellectual need of teaching.**

Here we find that Nehemiah appointed the Levites as Israel’s teachers.

It was their responsibility to engage the minds of the Israelites and convey the great realities of the faith.

**SECOND Principle of a Highly Effective Leader (vs. 2-3):**  **Permutation**

Nehemiah 7:2-3- *“I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do.* ***3****I said to them, “The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses.”*

Permutation is not a very common word. It means, “*Changing the order*.”

1. **Leaders need to find other good leaders.**

This particular act is one that is both courageous and gracious. It is courageous because many leaders have the belief that no one can do it as well as they can. It takes courage to say that I may not be needed in this particular role anymore. Many times, a leader has to give up a role that they enjoy doing themselves in the recognition that it is now someone else’s turn to do so.

Nehemiah shows us the importance of discipleship when he turns leadership roles over to Hanani and Hananiah. Now, there are reasons why Nehemiah picked these two people, see below…

2. **Leaders should look for reliability and reverence.**

You might remember the problem that Nehemiah faces at the end of chapter six? He has been put in a very difficult position of trying to distinguish between friend and foe. So, as he looks for those that can lead, they must be people that can be trusted.

First, they must be reliable, faithful and loyal. It must be true that they are not capable of being manipulated by the enemies or have a desire for monetary gain.

Second, God must be their priority. For Nehemiah knows that those who genuinely honor God can be trusted by others. When God is first, then the general good of the people will matter.

**Illustration:**

It's those stately geese I find especially impressive. Winging their way to a warmer climate, they often cover thousands of miles before reaching their destination. Have you ever studied why they fly as they do? It is fascinating to read what has been discovered about their flight pattern as well as their in-flight habits. Four come to mind.

**Those in front rotate their leadership (like Nehemiah)**. When one lead goose gets tired, it changes places with one in the wing of the V-formation and another flies point.

By flying as they do, the members of the flock create an upward air current for one another. Each flap of the wings literally creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. One author states that by flying in a V-formation, the whole flock gets 71 percent greater flying range than if each goose flew on its own. When one goose gets sick or wounded, two fall out of formation with it and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with the struggler until it's able to fly again.

The geese in the rear of the formation are the ones who do the honking. I suppose it's their way of announcing that they're following and that all is well. For sure, the repeated honks encourage those in front to stay at it.

As I think about all this, one lesson stands out above all others: it is the natural instinct of geese to work together. Whether it's rotating, flapping, helping, or simply honking, the flock is in it together...which enables them to accomplish what they set out to do. A great leader will know how to put his team together and who the right people are for the job to accomplish what they set out to do. This is the leadership quality we see displayed time after time in Nehemiah.

**THIRD Principle of a Highly Effective Leader (vs. 4):**  **Potential**

Nehemiah 7:4- “*Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt.”*

Have you ever noticed that some leaders have poor insight on the future? For example…

* A Western Union internal memo in 1876 said…

“This ‘telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.”

* In the 1920s, David Sarnoff’s associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio said…

“The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?”

* A Yale University management professor in response to Fred Smith’s paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service…

“The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a ‘C,’ the idea must be feasible.” (Fred Smith, by the way, went on to be the founder of Federal Express Corp.)

Nehemiah writes in 7:4…

“The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt.”

So, Nehemiah shows us that leaders should not be satisfied with the status quo. Nehemiah observed correctly, that though Jerusalem’s walls were built, it was empty. But to him (and we will see this in more detail in a later chapter), Jerusalem had great potential. It was his desire that God would prosper it economically and socially. Jerusalem could be and would be a thriving community when it increased in numbers.

**FORTH Principle of a Highly Effective Leader (vs. 5a):**  **Prayer**

Nehemiah 7:5a- “*Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy.*”

Leaders need to know the heart of God. This principle is closely connected to the previous. The idea to repopulate Jerusalem did not start in his own mind. The initiative belongs to God. God communicated it to his heart, and this is the reason he calls the people together. Nehemiah is a man of prayer. He spends time in God’s presence. He depends on Him for direction. So, now as the people are called together, Nehemiah does not keep the message for himself. Instead, we see the clear direction God continues to give.

**FIFTH Principle of a Highly Effective Leader (vs. 5b-60):**  **Preservation**

Nehemiah 7:5b-60- “*I found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return. This is what I found written there:* ***6****These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town,* ***7****in company with Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum and Baanah)…”*

In order to conserve room for the writing of this lesson, PLEASE SEE YOUR BIBLE FOR THE LIST OF MEN FROM ISREAL (vs. 8-60).

Leaders look at the past to discover the living story and the continuity of faith. Much of the bulk of this text is a repeat of Ezra chapter two. It is a record of Israel’s families that have returned from Babylon. But it is much more than a list of forgotten names. It is a declaration of a godly community’s spiritual commitment. These people that Nehemiah had gathered together needed to understand the significance of their past. And so, what Nehemiah does is make the history a living history that will serve the present and the future.

You see, these people tell a story with truths and values. They were heroes who have stayed dedicated.

They, willingly, uprooted themselves from their secure and familiar surroundings to follow God’s call to a more precarious and vulnerable existence. They moved to a city that had been ravished by the enemy. But they were men and women of faith.

So Nehemiah calls on the people that have just finished the wall to recognize their roots. These who have gone before have transferred their faith to them. Therefore, in the same way, they were preserving the faith for the next generation.

**SIXTH Principle of a Highly Effective Leader (vs. 61-65):**  **Purity**

Nehemiah 7:61-65- *“The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon*

*and Immer, but they could not prove their fathers’ houses nor their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, (642). Also, of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name). These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food until a priest with Urim and Thummim should arise.”*

We need leaders that have a passion for pure faith. The context that we find here is about families who applied to the priesthood, but they cannot accurately establish their genealogy. As a result, they are excluded. Please note this…

This was not about a pure race or ethnic cleansing as some have accused. This was about pluralism and syncretism. You see, what other races brought into the nation of Israel was a whole host of other religious allegiances. And as a result, Israel was always compromising their beliefs. They were letting go of the uniqueness of God and allowing Him to be considered just one of many other ways.

**Illustration:**

There is a story of a farmer who went each week to the Farmers’ Market to sell cottage cheese and apple butter that were made on his farm. He carried these in two large tubs, from which he ladled the cottage cheese or apple butter into smaller containers the customers brought. One day he got to market and discovered he’d forgotten one ladle. He felt he had no choice but to use the one he had for both products. Before long he couldn’t tell which was which.

Israel was always in danger of losing its uniqueness. Was it cottage cheese or apple butter?

After a while, you could not tell. You see this was not about a pure race, but about a pure faith.

**SEVENTH Principle of a Highly Effective Leader (vs. 66-73):**  **Paradigm**

Nehemiah 7:66-73- “*The whole assembly together was 42,360, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337. And they had 245 singers, male and female. Their horses were 736, their mules 245, their camels 435, and their donkeys 6,720. Now some of the heads of fathers’ houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 basins, 30 priests’ garments and 500 minas of silver. And some of the heads of fathers’ houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests’ garments. So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel, lived in their towns.”*

Leaders that love God and His work will sacrificially give. Those who love God’s Word will not neglect God’s work. So notice who leads the way in this text. It is Nehemiah! He leads the way in sacrificial giving. This was much more than the giving of the tithe. We can tell by the totals that these were gifts that were over and beyond what was expected. Not only that, they were given in a time when homes, farms and businesses were not established. But even though the economics of the time were far from stable, the people put God first. For they believed that if they honored God, He would care for them.

This was a new paradigm in giving, preparing for the giving observed in the New Testament…giving because one wants to, not because they have to.

**Closing:**

In closing, it is important to recognize that our man, Nehemiah, had all the seven principles of a highly effective leader. Which is probably why he got the main job done in a record breaking 52 days! Not only did Nehemiah know how to set the PRIORITY by PERMUTATION. But he had the POTENTIAL through PRAYER to PRESERVE a PURITY that ended in a PARADIGM. So the next time you think to pick up a book, oh lets say by Steven Covey ☺ to learn about highly effective people. Maybe you should think twice and instead read about this highly effective leader named, Nehemiah. It is safe to say, he clearly fits the bill.