

Leadership Is Work

Scripture: Nehemiah 4:21–23; Nehemiah 5:16; Nehemiah 6:15–16

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Can you imagine rebuilding Jerusalem's walls—as recorded in Nehemiah—under modern leadership models?

You could go with the What-do-you-think? leader. He would hold a meeting to determine what the majority opinion was on design options and choice of building materials.

You could choose the I-don't-care-what-you-think leader. He would make his decisions in a vacuum, leaving the inevitable problems to others.

And there's always the I-need-time-to-think leader. His indecisiveness would delay progress and frustrate those trying to help.

Of course, none of these leadership models are unique to our time. Indeed, they were around—in one form or another—in Nehemiah's day.

However, Nehemiah was no such leader. He was not passive, arrogant, or indecisive. Good leaders never are. They don't ask others to do what they are unwilling to do themselves. Nehemiah rolled up his sleeves and worked as diligently as anyone else. "We labored in the work," Nehemiah said (Nehemiah 4:21). He wasn't afraid to get his own hands dirty.

In fact, as Nehemiah described the work, he put in long days of nonstop toil until the task was complete: "Neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing" (Nehemiah 4:23). He said in Nehemiah 5:16, "Indeed, I also continued the work on this wall, and we did not buy any land." All his other business was put on hold while he worked.

He was relentless. He was dedicated to the work. And the people of Jerusalem followed his lead against ridicule, conspiracy, discouragement, deceit, and every form of vicious opposition. Chapters 4 through 6 record in detail how Nehemiah's enemies desperately tried to stop his work.

And in spite of all of that, because of the initiative of this one man, the entire wall around Jerusalem was completed in just fifty-two days (Nehemiah 6:15).

Nehemiah was the epitome of an effective leader. He was a starter. He was strongly motivated. He knew how to organize and motivate followers. He overcame obstacles. He was practical, and wise, and determined. He was a man of action, but thoughtful, too.

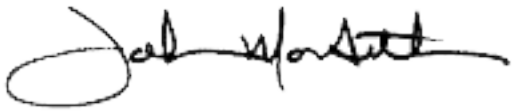
And while we should rightly esteem Nehemiah for these traits, he would be the first to say that the "secret" of his success was the Lord. He said as much when he noted that even Israel's enemies

acknowledged that the work had been accomplished with the help of Israel's God (Nehemiah 6:16).

God blessed Nehemiah with the leadership traits he needed for the task at hand. He develops those same traits—wisdom, tenacity, organization, motivation, to name a few—in the leaders He gives to the church.

If you enjoy the blessing of that kind of leadership, give thanks to God. And thank your leaders; they're working diligently for your benefit.

If the leaders around you need to grow, pray for them (1 Thessalonians 5:25), encourage and esteem them (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13)—because your spiritual health, and the health of Christ's church, is tied to its leaders.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Foster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

(Adapted from [Called to Lead](#))

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