

Principles of Leadership and Work

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[0 : 0 0] DIY SOS. Have you seen that program on TV? I love that program with Nick Knowles and his team. And if you haven't seen it, they gather a whole community of tradespeople from all over the place and they all come together and they blitz a house or a property to make it fit for purpose for maybe somebody who is disabled, for a family where there's been need or bereavement or whatever it's been, but they transform the place for living. And then at the end when they've completed all this, all these tradespeople, different trades, all coming together, labourers, chippies, sparks, all of those, all in their own time, bringing their own skills, often at their own expense and bringing some of the stuff that they need as well, you know, all the materials. But the greatest part of the show is not just all the banter that goes on, but at the end, they all gather in this street and the family that's going to be the recipients of this new home that will transform their lives, go into the house and are shown around. There's a lot of great emotion, but one I find is the greatest emotion is when they step outside and they are faced with this sea of people who have all come together. Many of them didn't even know them, but responded to the call.

And they thank them and tell them what a difference their labourers, the fruit of their labourers will make. What gets me is there's all these tradespeople just like wiping tears away from their eyes and there. I'm sat on the settee next to Mandela, I'm wiping tears from my eyes as well because it's so emotional. But they all came together. Jerusalem's walls were a DIY SOS problem. They were a project that had to be addressed. And as we heard, the gates were burnt down, the walls were in ruin.

Nehemiah couldn't even get his horse through one of the gates because of the rubble. These people needed serious help. John Stock, the biblical teacher and commentator, said of leadership, indignation and compassion form a powerful combination. They are indispensable to vision and therefore to leadership. And Nehemiah was called to be that leader. And often you need that indignation in our leadership. You know, how has it come to this? Why has this been allowed to happen?

Where did it all go wrong? How can we seek to right this injustice? Maybe you feel that fire in your belly for something. And compassion, you know, it's compassion and God's compassion for people who have lost their way and turned from God. Are people who have lost their motivation, their dignity, their self-worth. You know, they're vulnerable. They're vulnerable both physically and spiritually.

Nehemiah, it says, then I said to them, you see the trouble we are in. You know, it's not, it's the trouble we are in. It's not the trouble you are in. That's good leadership. It's shared focus.

[3 : 2 0] Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned by with fire. Come, let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace. It was a disgrace. Let us, not you, let us start rebuilding. So they began this good work. What was the catalyst to move a people from lethargy to motivation to say, let us start rebuilding. It has to be God's intervention through Nehemiah and the power of God's Holy Spirit moving through a whole people for all people. Notice that Nehemiah gathers, engages a powerful workforce from a very diverse skill set. People ready to do manual labor, to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in, even if it's not their, their gifting. You know, priests, Levites, rulers, everyday folk, merchants, temple servants, guards, farmers and goldsmiths.

They all came together with a common purpose to prosper the whole community. Many of these people were way out of their comfort zone. They came together as one. Perhaps you feel that when God prompts you to do something, to get involved, you initially or straight away say, oh, it's not me, it's not my thing. But these people stepped up. Nehemiah even records how the reconstructions of one of the gates was carried out by men from Gibeon and Mizpah. They were outside the city

gates.

They had nothing really to gain, but they caught the fire. They caught the vision and they joined in. And no, there was no celebrity here. You know, people came together.

You know, sadly, you know, often we think, oh, you know, we should employ people to do things for us. Maybe you get frustrated as I do when you see week after week adverts on the church news sheet saying, could people join this? Could you help with hospitality? Could you do this? Could you do that?

And week after week, it appears that it shouldn't be that way. As people come together with a common purpose, they just came together as one and said, what can we offer?

[5 : 48] What can we do? What is the job, Nehemiah? Show us what to do and we'll get on with it. What a great motivational, good news story that is.

They see the goal. They see what has got to come. They see together. They come together to move rubble, to get dirty.

Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank.

Just read that again and get it right this time. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank. Through Nehemiah, God had gathers afresh the servant heart of the whole people. This is the good news story. The people embrace the vision Nehemiah communicates from God. And yes, there is opposition. There will always be opposition. We're going to talk about that, I think, next week.

[6 : 55] But he knows his opposition. He knows where it's coming from. It's always good to know in leadership of God's people for those who definitely will be against God's plan.

They often stand out like a sore thumb. You've probably heard the age-old story of the archdeacon's visit to a very quaint church of maybe just only 15 people in the congregation. He's met by the warden who's 75 and he's the youngest. And he's been there sort of man and boy, really. And showing the archdeacon around, he shows him all the crumbling stonework. He shows him all the stuff that's growing out of the gutters. He tells them that the heating hasn't worked for some time. He also tells them that the last two vicars that were here had this great idea that they should go into the school, where they would be nice and warm on a Sunday morning, where they could worship and they could gather with the wider community of the families that go to the school as well.

The archdeacon is trying desperately to think of something positive to say and said, well, you've certainly been presented with a few opportunities and changes in your time.

[8 : 08] And the warden, without hesitation, turned around and said, and be assured, archdeacon, I can tell you, I have voted against every one of them. The principles of Jesus' leadership, and as we have seen in Nehemiah, is the people come together as one, sharing in a common vision and a purpose.

The principles of Jesus' leadership are vastly different sometimes than the many business models that we have inherited within our present culture, where people measure success on status, wealth, power and control.

You know, Jesus humbles himself. Number two, Jesus was guided by his father's will rather than his own. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do that of him who has sent me.

Jesus defined greatness by being a servant. If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all, as it says in Mark's Gospel.

And Jesus left his place at the head of the table and to serve the needs of others, seeking the lost and the marginalized, and encourages us to do the same.

[9 : 27] Jesus shared his responsibility and authority with those he called. And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

And Jesus built a team to carry out the commission that he gave us. We are the team. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded.

And behold, I will be with you until the end of the age. Matthew's Gospel. We have been given the tools. We have the tools.

They're here in the power of the Holy Spirit and in Jesus's teaching. We are that team to carry out the commission that Jesus gave us.

[10 : 35] Do we accept being part of that team? Do we accept the task? Do we embrace the authority that's been given to us?

Faced with this challenge, I'd like you to just pause for a moment because this makes me pause and think. Do I need to reassess my commitment to Jesus and his call on my life as part of his mission and commission and part of his church?

Am I leading others to Jesus? Am I gathering disciples as he has called me to do? Am I doing this in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Do I know the cost and sacrifice, the joys, the adventure and the sweat of serving him? Am I ready to hear and act on what God is asking for me for such a time as this within his bride, the church?

As we emerge from this devastating 15 months, as we regather, we are gathering together to help others rebuild, often spiritually and emotionally from the effects of this pandemic.

[11 : 59] What is God saying and asking of us personally in our own discipleship? The great John Wimber said, and I'll paraphrase it, professional management tools and consultants can never replace reliance on the presence, initiative and guidance that can only come through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Nehemiah's people were joined in a common purpose. Nehemiah's people were joined in a common purpose.

Nehemiah's people were joined in a common purpose. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice for us and your call on our lives today.

Make us worthy of that calling, I pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.