

28.12.2019 LEADERS IN ISRAEL

“And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them” Nehemiah 8:12

In Ezra and Nehemiah we see men who were used by God mightily as leaders in Israel. Ezra was a scribe and Nehemiah a governor.

Whatever leadership roles God calls us to, in the Bible we find principles of leadership that remain true for all ages.

Influence:

Leaders can have a positive or negative influence on their people.

In the stories of Jeroboam, Rehoboam and Ahab we find examples of bad leaders.

In the stories of Deborah, Josiah and David we find leaders who were a positive influence.

Such influence is far reaching. We find that when God assessed the kings of Judah and Israel, He always stated that that they were either good kings after the example of David or bad kings after the example of Jeroboam.

“He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam...” 1 Kings 15:34

And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. 2 Chronicles 29:2

How is it with us today? If we are called to leadership, can we boldly say to our people, as the apostle Paul did, *“Follow me as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).*

‘Colossians 3:17 says, “Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,” and 1 Corinthians 2:16 speaks of the spiritual man as having “the mind of Christ.” A spiritual leader knows that all of life, down to its smallest detail, has to do with God. If we are to lead people to see and reflect God’s glory, we must think theologically about everything.’ *John Piper*

A spiritual leader makes his people understand that Christ’s life, its purpose and destiny, must be the life, purpose and destiny of every Christian.

Courage and Empowerment:

Over the past few weeks, we have seen that Nehemiah was a man of great courage. What gives spiritual leaders courage?

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Spiritual leaders are courageous because:

1. They are following God’s commands.
2. They know that God is with them.

The God who commands them and is with them is also the God who empowers them to do the task.

Purpose and Passion:

Both Ezra and Nehemiah were purposeful and passionate leaders.

Their purpose and passion in life was to do God's will and bring Him glory in all things. This was their purpose not only for their individual lives, but for their people. They were passionate that their people would follow God with an undivided heart, and thus glorify His Name.

All the true leaders of Israel, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, King David, the prophets (are some examples) had this same purpose and passion.

When Jesus came to earth, He said of Himself, *"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."* John 8:28, 29

Humility:

A spiritual leader is marked by his humility; following in the steps of his Master, Christ Jesus, he is not ashamed to humble himself, be humbled and even humiliated, if it will bring glory to God.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Philippians 2:3

Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart...Matthew 11:29

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...Philippians 2:5

Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. 1
Corinthians 9:19

Be clothed with humility...God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. 1 Peter 5:5

Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you ^ldisputed among yourselves on the road?" But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Mark 9:33-35

Perseverance:

Ezra and Nehemiah faced severe opposition from the enemies of God. Nevertheless, they remained undaunted for they knew they were doing the work of God. Nehemiah was particularly bold. When confronted by enemies, he refused to leave his work.

*Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, **"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?"** But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner. (Nehemiah 6:2-4)*

*Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. **Our God will fight for us.**" (Nehemiah 4:19, 20)*

The only way to face opposition is to be certain of the task we are called to and persist in it, without stopping to make excuses or defence. That was what Jesus did; He set His face like a flint to finish the work His father had sent Him to do, and He 'opened not His mouth' but committed Himself to His Father (Isaiah 53:7, 1 Peter 2:23).

When we are certain that we are in God's will and we are doing the work He has called us to do, we can live in utter confidence. Fear has no place in the heart of a man or woman of faith, for we know that though the battle may be fierce, the battle is not ours but God's. He is our Leader and Commander and He is the Victorious One; we are only called to follow Him and claim His victory over the Enemy by faith.

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus... You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2:1, 3

Conclusion:

Much is expected of a spiritual leader. But when God calls anyone to leadership, He will provide the mighty resources of His Spirit to enable every leader to fulfil the ministry to which he has been called. He is waiting for us to call on Him.

'The path of men who are placed as leaders is not an easy one. But they are to see in every difficulty a call to prayer. Never are they to fail of consulting the great Source of all wisdom. Strengthened and enlightened by the Master Worker, they will be enabled to stand firm against unholy influences and to discern right from wrong, good from evil. They will approve that which God approves, and will strive earnestly against the introduction of wrong principles into His cause. *Prophets and Kings: p. 31*

Now these are the last words of David.

Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel:

"The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me:

'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.'" 2 Samuel 23:1-4