

#### 4. Leaders Realize There Comes A Time to Act-- 1:11

Nehemiah prayed that when he approached the King with this matter that was heavy on his heart that he might find grace in the eyes of King Artaxerxes. The leader realizes that someone has got to take the initiative and get something done about the problem. Just ignoring it won't make it go away. There comes a time for action.

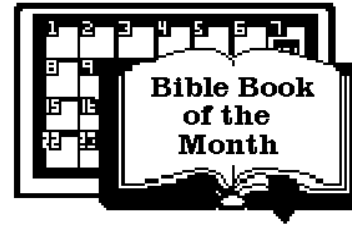
##### *Benefits Of Prayer As Seen In Nehemiah.*

Nehemiah is a blend of prayer and action. All who lead must place a high priority on prayer. Here are four short reasons why prayer is so important:

- 1) Prayer gives one a new perspective of his problem. Prayer helps to clear one's vision. When you first face a situation it may be "foggy", but prayer will "burn away the fog."
- 2) Prayer helps one to establish his priorities. Nehemiah was serving the king, but what task was he going to put first in his life?
- 3) Prayer helps one to attain a new sense of purpose. Nehemiah was serving the king, but he saw where he needed to be to help his people in their hour of need.
- 4) Prayer helps one to reduce his problem to a size he can handle. As Nehemiah prayed about the problem he saw that the solution was to take one step at a time. The first step was to speak to the king about the problem.

#### **LESSONS FROM CHAPTER 1**

1. Leadership must be deserved and not demanded-- 1:1-4
2. Nehemiah was a leader concerned about the welfare of his brethren-- 1:1-3.
3. A leader must have a compassionate heart -- 1:5
4. Leaders believe in the power of prayer and are prayful -- 1:4-11



# Nehemiah

Lesson # 1

Text: 1:1-11

## God's Picture of A Leader

Glance through today's newspaper and chances are good you will find another story of leadership breakdown. A breakdown in the home, in the school, and within nations! The crying need for good leadership comes through loud and clear.

So much of our personal frustration in daily living comes as a direct result of faulty leadership-- tensions at home and at work, communication breakdowns in the community, power struggles in the state and nation.

What do we mean when we use the word **leadership**? If I were asked to define it in one single word, the word would be **influence**.

Reams of pages and stacks of books have been penned on the subject of leadership. However, there is one book, written about 430 BC, that looms as a classic work on effective leadership. Yet it is strangely obscure and virtually unknown to people of today. It was written by a man who was prominent in his community and in politics in the ancient Middle East. He not only possessed an exceptional personal philosophy of leadership, but he lived it out as well. In his lifetime, this gentleman rose from total obscurity to international recognition. This series on "Leadership" will study this man.

What Nehemiah had to say concerning leadership speaks to the very same issues you and I face today. Whether we are thinking of "leadership" in the terms of the home, the church, at work, or the community and nation, we can learn some great truths from Nehemiah. For example we learn--

- ! **how to relate to touchy people**
- ! **the balance between faith and personal planning**
- ! **how to handle discouragement**
- ! **what to do with unwarranted criticism**

In this biblical manual for potential leaders we find timeless and reliable guidelines that work.

## NEHEMIAH — The Making of A Leader

Nehemiah sets forth the principles of leadership in an excellent way. Many of the kings of Israel and Judah serve as examples of "bad" leadership, and in the captivity we see the results of such leadership. But in Nehemiah we now see the personal marks of a competent leader and how he must lead to obtain positive results.

In this series of studies study we will learn from Nehemiah about planning, organizing, integrating the duties of various people, and some points about motivation. But from chapter one let's notice some personal traits needed in the leader, whether we are talking about a leader in the home, the church, at work, or in the nation.

**1. A Leader Has A Clear Recognition of the Needs 1:1-4**

Nehemiah, the cup-bearer of the Persian King, was visited at the palace in Shushan by his brother Hanani and others from Jerusalem. These men saw a problem in Jerusalem and they came to Nehemiah apparently thinking he would be able to help. Anxiously Nehemiah inquires about the situation in the home land and concerning Jerusalem.

Nehemiah's visitors responded that the people "are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down and the gates thereof are burned with fire." Nehemiah *heard* what they said.

Recognizing the need seems such an elementary concept, especially for leaders. But many people in responsible leadership positions never seem to see the problems they ought to be solving.

The father and husband must keep his ears and eyes open to the needs of his family; the elders to the needs of the church; the business man to the needs of his business; and the politician to the needs of the country. Many become so preoccupied with other things that they lose sight of the "needs."

**2. A Leader Must Be Personally Concerned With the Needs 1:4-5**

Nehemiah went a step beyond recognition of the problem; he was personally concerned with the need. He not only heard these matters, but he also sat down and identified with them.

We learn from Nehemiah that one is never used by God to bring blessings until we open our eyes and see things as they are. Nehemiah was used by God to build the wall, but *first he wept over the ruins*.

**3. A Leader Goes First To God With The Problem -- 1:4-11**

In verse 5 we hear Nehemiah say, "I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven..." He prayed. Our problems can never be solved right until they are solved with God.

What is your first response when a need comes to your attention? Do we start looking for the blame or the cure?

The greatest impact we get from viewing the book of Nehemiah as a whole, is that a godly leader keeps a well worn path to his closet of prayer. It becomes obvious to us that Nehemiah never did anything without first praying. We come to learn more about **PRAYER**, its daily need and effects, from this Old Testament book than from another other book in all the Bible!

*Look at how Nehemiah prayed before the Lord:*

1) First, he *praised God!* (v.5). For prayers to be effective we must be reverent (1:4,5). We are living in a time of great irreverence toward God. Even those professing to honor God frequently use His name vainly, and fail to approach His Holy Name with respect and awe.

2) Second, he realized the *greatness if God*, (v.5). He may work for the king of the greatest empire in the world till that time, but he worshipped the Great and Awesome God who created heaven and earth. For Nehemiah, the greatness of his God reduces the size of his problem.

3) Third, he humbly *confesses sin*, (v.6). Nehemiah recognized that it was "sin" that put Israel into such a mess in captivity and desecrated their city. While he confessed and prayed for the sins "of the children of Israel" he identifies himself with his people by saying "which *we* have sinned against Thee." A good leader must identify with the people.

4) Fourth, his prayer was *based on scripture*, (v.7-9). He remembered that God had forecast such a scattering among the nations if His people forsake him (v. 7,8; Lev. 26; Deut 4:25-31). But God had also *promised* if His people returned to Him that He would gather them from where they had been scattered. And now Nehemiah comes before God to claim the promise!

Nehemiah knew that God was a promise-keeping God! And he had the faith that if God's people would do their part and return to Him and God would certainly do His part.

His prayer was one of submission, but it was a bold petition before God (read v. 10-11).