

PROBLEM SOLVING LEADERSHIP

Nehemiah 5:1-19

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INTRODUCTION

- A. Video: Stuck on an Escalator—Youtube.
- B. Leadership is about getting things done. More specifically its about solving problems. For example, leaders know how to get off escalators.
 - 1. Nehemiah knew how to solve problems.
 - 2. He lead Israel to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem and solve their safety and security problem.
- C. In Nehemiah 5 we learn how Nehemiah solved problems and how we can too.
 - 1. In this chapter Nehemiah addresses an internal problem—5:1-5. Summarize: There was an exploitation of the poor by the rich, to the point that some poor had to sell their daughters into slavery.
 - 2. Let's notice several problem solving steps that Nehemiah took to address this internal problem.

I. FIRST, THINK ABOUT THE PROBLEM.

- A. Thinking about a problem is not always our first response, especially when the problem involves an injustice. What we usually do is get mad about it.
 - 1. This was Nehemiah's first response too---v.6.
Nehemiah 5:6 When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry.
 - 2. Anger doesn't usually solve problems. Most of the time it just creates more.
- B. A better response is to think the problem through.
 - 1. This is what Nehemiah did next—v.7.
Nehemiah 5:7 I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials....
 - 2. Remember that many times our first impulse isn't the best impulse.

II. SECOND, ADDRESS THE PROBLEM.

- A. Thinking about a problem doesn't mean we never address it. Avoiding problems or delaying a response doesn't usually work.
 - 1. Some people just ignore problems hoping they go away.
 - 2. Someone has said, "Problems that go away by themselves also come back by themselves."
- B. Nehemiah addressed the problem after he thought about it—v.7.
Nehemiah 5:7 I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!" So I called together a large meeting to deal with them
- C. He didn't mince his words, he spoke frankly about the problem as he saw it—v.9.
Nehemiah 5:9 So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?"

III. THIRD, OFFER A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

- A. Anyone can see a problem.
 - 1. Leaders, however, take that one step further.
 - 2. They not only identify a problem, they also identify a solution.
- B. This is what Nehemiah did—v.10-11.
Nehemiah 5:10-11 ¹⁰let the exacting of usury stop! ¹¹ Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the usury you are charging them--the hundredth part of the money, grain, new wine and oil."

IV. FOURTH, CALL FOR A COMMITMENT.

A. This is what Nehemiah did—v.12b.

Nehemiah 5:12 (NIV) Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised.

- B. There comes a time when you either “fish or cut bait”.
1. This means we shouldn’t analyze a problem to death.
 2. Once a solution is found, leaders ask for a commitment.

V. FIFTH, LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

A. If you want others to do the right thing, let them see you doing the right thing.

1. It may be funny to say “Do as I say, not as I do”.
2. But that’s not leadership. Its dictatorship.

B. Nehemiah led by example—v.10.

Nehemiah 5:10 I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let the exacting of usury stop!

1. This could mean Nehemiah and his brothers were guilty of the same thing the other nobles were, but he now committed to stop it.
2. This could also mean he and his brothers didn’t charge interest as the other nobles had.
3. Either way, Nehemiah called for the practice to stop immediately.

CONCLUSION

A. Do you face a problem in your life right now?

B. Remember the steps for solving problems we learned from Nehemiah.

1. Think about the problem.
2. Address the problem.
3. Offer a solution for the problem.
4. Call for a commitment to solve the problem,.
5. Lead by example.

C. Its time to call for a commitment.