

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP SERIES (6)

To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition

1 Timothy 3:1 (NEB)

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES FROM NEHEMIAH (PT 2)

By Ps Andrew Foo (28/3/2013)

A. THINGS WE LEARN FROM NEHEMIAH

1. He asks the right questions
2. He receives God's burden and vision
3. He processes God's burden and clarified vision through prayer
4. He was sensitive to wait for God's timing

5. He practiced Spirit-directed planning

Consider the words of Arnold Toynbee, the great English Historian:
"Apathy can only be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by 2 things – first an ideal (a vision) which captures one's imagination, and second, a definite intelligent plan for carrying out that ideal into practice."

Nehemiah's heart burned to fulfill God's vision for rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was a pro-active leader. A pro-active person may not be specially gifted, but he is a person of action, who moves towards activity that helps in the progress of the vision. He is alert, aware, awake and involved. Nehemiah knew that as vital as prayer is, it would take action to produce change. Nehemiah wasn't the only Jew who knew of the broken down condition of the walls in Jerusalem. But, as far as we know, he was the only one, with Ezra who rose up and took action.

a) There are at least 3 reasons why planning is important:

i. God practices it

- Jer 29:11 (NIV)

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

- 1 Cor 14:3 (NIV)

³ But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.

ii. God commands it

- 1 Cor 14:40 (NLT)

⁴⁰ But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.

- Pro 4:26 (Good News)

²⁶ Plan carefully what you do, and whatever you do will turn out right.

- Pro 16:9 (Good News)

⁹ You may make your plans, but God directs your actions.

iii. Good stewardship and spirituality

- Eph 5:15-17 (JB Phillips)

¹⁵⁻²¹ Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don't be vague but firmly grasp

what you know to be the will of God. Don't get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls. Express your joy in singing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making music in your hearts for the ears of God! Thank God at all times for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And "fit in with" each other, because of your common reverence for Christ.

- Time management involves making use of opportunities that come our way, and that requires some planning. It's good stewardship to plan.
- 1 Chron 28:11-12 (NIV)

¹¹ *Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. ¹² He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.*

b) What are some steps involved in planning? Neh 2:1-9 (NIV)

2 In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, ² so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."

I was very much afraid,³ but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

⁴ The king said to me, “What is it you want?”

Then I prayed to the God of heaven,⁵ and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.”

⁶ Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

⁷ I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?⁸ And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.⁹ So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king’s letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

i. Think it through

- V1 – Nehemiah received this burden 4 months earlier and since then he has been praying and waiting for something to happen. Now something happens. What has Nehemiah been doing between the time the vision of rebuilding the walls was birthed until the time when he was actually able to present the idea to the king? Nehemiah was busy praying, but he was also thinking things through. He wasn’t just waiting passively.

When the king asked in v4 – “What is it you want?”

Nehemiah knew how to respond, because he was already doing some preliminary planning.

- Pro 13:16 (NLT)
¹⁶ *Wise people think before they act; fools don't—and even brag about their foolishness.*
- 3 key questions to ask:
 - Where am I now?
 - Where do I want to be?
 - How will I get there?

ii. Prepare for God-given opportunities

- When divine opportunities knock, we need to be prepared to go through the door. A lot of times, opportunities may come our way, but because we aren't prepared, we may not recognize them and miss them.

- Neh 2:1-3 –

2 In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, ² so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."

I was very much afraid, ³ but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

- The opportune moment Nehemiah had been waiting for presented itself. Now he has the chance to share his burden and vision with the king. But this opportunity was not without risk. If the king wasn't happy with Nehemiah's sad face, he could order his execution immediately and that would be the end of the vision.

iii. Establish a goal

- Neh 2:5

⁵ and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."

iv. Set a deadline

- Neh 2:6

⁶ Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

v. Anticipate potential problems and downside risks

- Neh 2:7

⁷ I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?"

- The journey Nehemiah was planning to take was about 800 miles, fraught with potential dangers.

- Nehemiah was requesting for letters of authority and travel permits so that the journey through the different provinces would be unhindered.
- In planning for an event or a project, it's wise to ask: "What are some possible problems?"
- Pro 22:3 (NLT)

³ *A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.*

vi. Calculate the cost

- This is the budgeting part of planning
- Neh 2:8

⁸ *And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.*

- How did Nehemiah know what specifically to ask for?
- How did he know that there was a royal forest near Jerusalem?
- Luke 14:28 (NLT)

²⁸ *"But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it?"*

vii. Trust God for the results

- Neh 2:8b

⁸ *And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.*

- Pro 16:1 (Good News)

16 We may make our plans, but God has the last word.

- Neh 2:9 – The king sent a military escort, which was more than he requested for.

⁹ *So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.*

6. He engaged in preparation before implementation – Neh 2:11-20

¹¹ *So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹² Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. ¹³ And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. ¹⁴ Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.*

¹⁷ *Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." ¹⁸ And I told them of*

the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.

So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.

¹⁹ *But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"*

²⁰ *So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."*

a) Preparing the heart before implementing the plan (v11)

¹¹ *So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.*

➔ What could Nehemiah possibly have done during the 3 days in Jerusalem?

- Rested physically?
 - Journey from Susa to Jerusalem on horseback was exhausting
 - Dangerous to lead and work when tired
- Refreshed his mind and spirit?
 - Maybe he prayed and meditated on God's law
 - Reflection → Remembrance → Refreshing
- Reviewed the strategy for rebuilding?

b) He conducted firsthand inspection and assessment (v12-16)

¹² Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. ¹³ And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. ¹⁴ Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

➔ In Chp 1 and 2, Hanani shared with Nehemiah the status of the Jewish exiles and the condition of the walls, but it's never enough. Nehemiah needed to see the situation on the ground, firsthand.

➔ Twice, the passage mentions Nehemiah "examining the walls"

- In Hebrew, "examining" means "to look into something carefully". It's a medical word for probing a wound to see the extent of the damage.
- Nehemiah made a careful, conscious, probing examination of the wall for 1 reason: As a leader, it was his job to be aware of and attentive to the details and to develop a plan of action.
 - Vast difference between being aware of details and being lost in those details
 - Management vs micromanagement
- Nehemiah made a careful investigation of the facts. In his mind, he was developing a plan for the whole process of construction and determining the necessary personnel and

building materials. So, all the groundwork for the huge rebuilding of the wall was taking place in this preparation time.

c) He demonstrated skillful motivation (v17-18)

¹⁷ Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach."

¹⁸ And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.

So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.

- ➔ After doing all the groundwork and inspections, he was ready to discuss the need for the rebuilding of the city wall. He hasn't said anything about his plans for 3 days. But when he had a clear idea of the real situation, he was ready to brief the city council leaders.
- ➔ There are 3 vitally important words in v17: "We", "Us" and "We". For Nehemiah to properly motivate the city council leaders and potential workers, he had to identify himself with the need. He could have blamed them for the condition of the city wall. After all, he was about 800miles away.

When we cast blame or criticism, we actually de-motivate. But when we identify with the problem, we encourage motivation. Even though Nehemiah identified with the people and was concerned about the situation, he didn't hide the hard facts and challenges ahead. He essentially said: "Let's find a solution together".

→ 2 kinds of motivation:

- Extrinsic – Employs external incentives
- Intrinsic – Appeals to the inner person and the inner values

The citizens responded willingly to Nehemiah's proposal because he was able to appeal to their intrinsic zeal.

A good example of a contemporary leader who has effectively utilized intrinsic is Winston Churchill. Listen to the words he spoke as England prepared to confront Nazi Germany just 3 days after Hitler rapidly occupied Belgium, France and Holland.

"I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this Government: 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.'

We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all cost, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival."

Later, after the bombs fell and it appeared Great Britain would have to stand alone against Hitler, he declared:

"We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may

be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

In Neh 2:18, we see the same inner strength, commitment and spirit of faith which Nehemiah communicated to the people. The people responded likewise saying: "Let us start rebuilding"

d) We witnessed the start of inevitable opposition (v19-20)

¹⁹ *But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"*

²⁰ *So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."*

➔ As soon as the rebuilding team were getting ready to roll up their sleeves to start work, the opposition began.

- The Hebrew word for "mocked" means "to stammer, to stutter, to utter repeatedly words of deviousness"
- Sanballat and Tobiah held their heads high, looked down their noses and scoffed at the small group of Jews, saying: "You are out of your minds. You'll never be able to do it. Aren't you all rebelling against the king?"

➔ In v20, we can see Nehemiah responding with a get-tough policy.

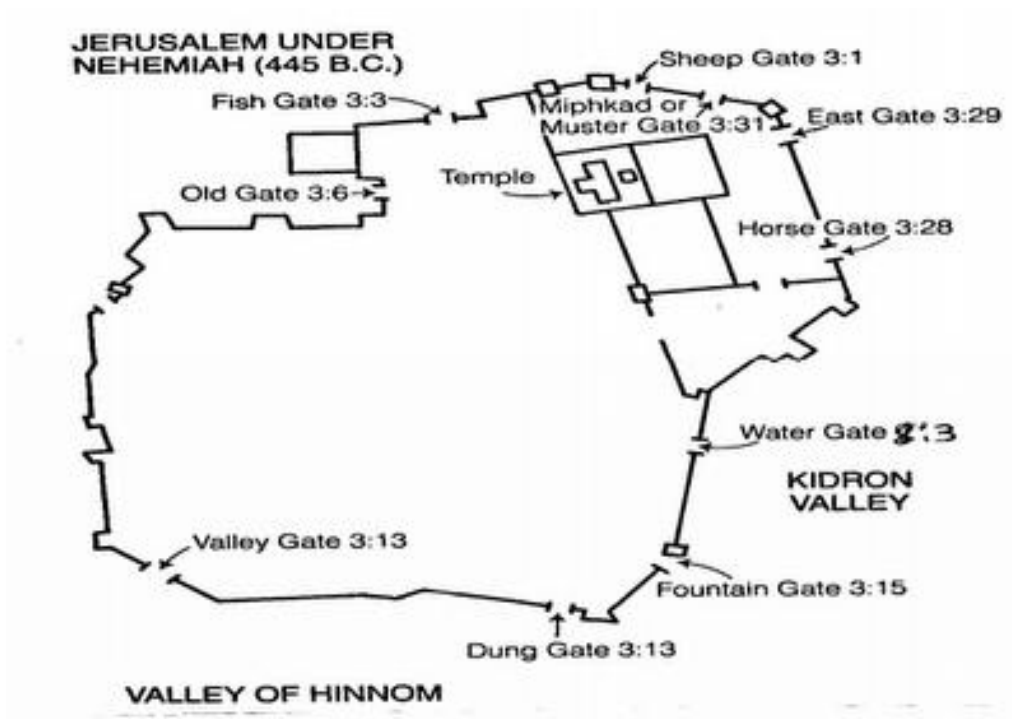
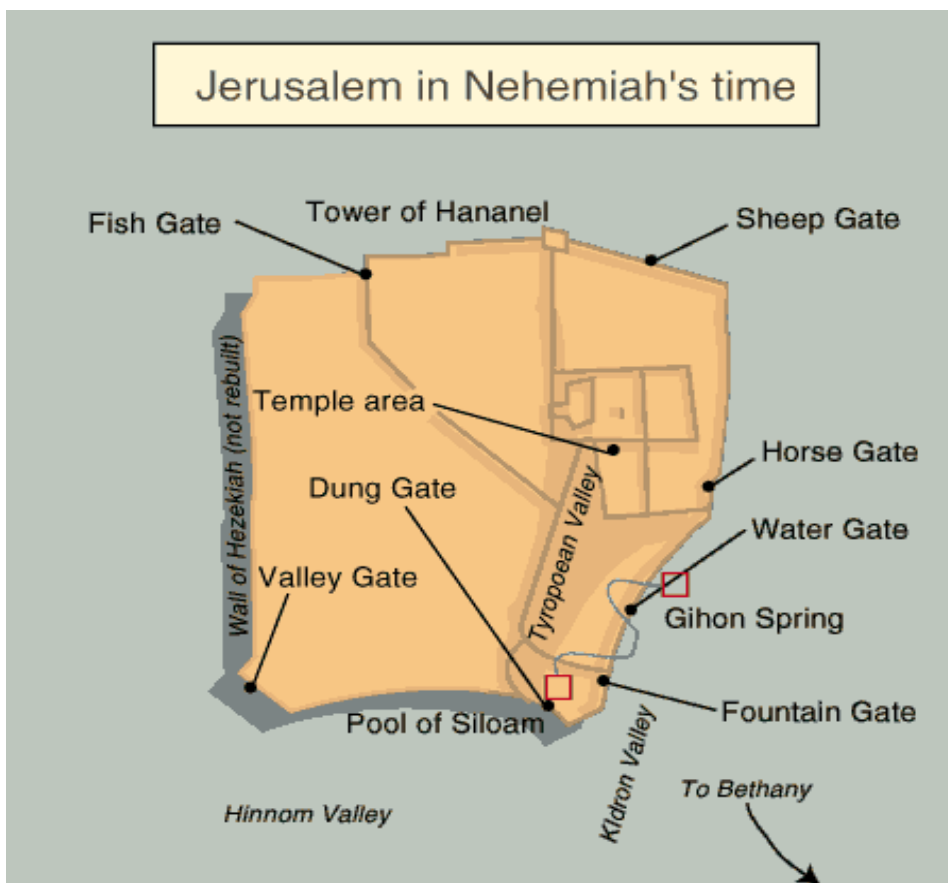
Nehemiah knew that he and the people of Jerusalem were doing God's work, and he wasn't going to listen to anyone

who was actively opposing to what he knew was the right thing to do.

An important part of leadership involves the ability to handle criticism. We need God's wisdom and humility to differentiate constructive and destructive criticism. If God has clearly communicated a particular direction/vision, we can't allow people's negative response or feedback to pressurize us to alter or change the course of our direction. People can share different ideas/methods which will help us move towards a God-given vision, but not to change or alter the vision.

As leaders we must know how to wisely manage feedback and criticism. We need to evaluate the opposition in the light of the spirit and attitude in which the criticism is given. If our critics listen to God's voice, it will be wise to consider their views, but if their spirit is wrong and they have hardly ever contributed positively in the past, it may not be worth listening to their complaints.

7. He is diligent and knows how to organize, delegate and deploy people to work (Neh 3)



➔ Neh 3 records for us the start of the process of rebuilding the broken wall of Jerusalem. Let's summarize a few key observations here before we dive into some of the details:

- Firstly, what happened here was a result of incredible organization. The entire community was mobilized and was able to work harmoniously on all parts of the city wall.
- Secondly, the entire workforce demonstrated tremendous dedication and enthusiasm as they strained feverishly to complete the job on time.
- Thirdly, this passage shows the involvement of the whole Jewish community, as we see the mention of representatives of different crafts, trades, towns and social classes. (This is a beautiful picture of what God's church should become)

➔ This story begins at the sheep gate (N.E. corner of the city) and proceeds in a counter clockwise direction around the wall. About 40 key men are named as participants in the reconstruction of about 45 sections.

The towns listed as the homes of the builders may have represented the administrative centers of the province of Judah. 10 gates are named:

- | | | |
|------------|------------|--------------|
| - Sheep | - Dung | - East |
| - Fish | - Fountain | - Inspection |
| - Jeshanah | - Water | |
| - Valley | - Horse | |

The account suggests that most of the rebuilding was concerned with these gates, where the assaults of the enemy were always concentrated.

→ Let's look at a few principles we can gather and learn from Neh 3:

i. Mobilization

- a) It's the art of marshalling together all of the available workforce
- b) Nehemiah employed all of the available people in the workforce, men and women, young and old. Let's meet some of them. We start with Eliashib, the high priest. His grandfather was also a priest during Zerubbabel's restoration 80 years earlier. This is a great place to start. If the spiritual leaders don't work, it'll be difficult to motivate the rest.
- c) In V8, we learn that even perfumers were involved in this reconstruction project. The fragrance of some perfumes came from crushing flower petals. These people worked with soft, fragrant roses, but now in this rebuilding project, they are involved in fixing ruins of broken down walls. Interestingly, archaeologists have discovered evidence of a perfume manufactured near En Gedi, made from a Balsam extract.
- d) We also meet 2 city officials who oversee 2 districts of Jerusalem. One of them, Shalum, brought his daughters to pitch in. the girls came out to work on the wall too. V32 refers even to goldsmiths and merchants. So, we see a tremendous mix of the kinds of people who were involved.

- e) There is one point we must realize as we endeavor to lead and mobilize people for God's work. It's hardly ever possible for us to get 100% agreement from a group of people to take ownership of a project.

Nehemiah had a group, the Tekoite nobles, who didn't support the rebuilding project (v5). Such phenomenal is common in any kind of ministry which is dependent on volunteers. Jesus has only 12 apostles and yet 1 betrayed Him.

We aren't sure why these Tekoite nobles didn't support the work, but what we know is that wise leaders work with those willing to work. They won't waste time on slacker and those who aren't willing nor available.

- f) There is no substitute for diligence in God's work, as it's a God-like virtue. Jesus declared in John 5:17 – "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I too am working"

ii. Coordination and delegation

- a) Coordination is the job of organizing all the people into a functioning unit. It's one thing to have a huge pool of volunteers, but quite another to effectively deploy them.

It's really impressive to see that every person/group had a specific place to work. Everyone had a definite assignment.

- V2 – The men of Jericho built "next" to the high priest and "next" to them Zakkur.
- The phrase "next to him" or "next to them" is a picture of coordination in the work.

- In a sense, there isn't big gaps along the stretch of the wall they were rebuilding. Every part of the wall had workers assigned.

b) The ability of delegation of work is a very important aspect of coordination. Without applying the principle of delegation, we will never maximize our leadership and work potential.

May God teach us how to break down God's work into smaller, bite-sizes, which can be shared with others. Jerusalem's walls were built by distinct groups working at specific places.

DL Moody said: "I'd rather put 10 men to work, than do the work of 10 men."

c) To delegate means to assign and authorize someone to do a specific task and to act on your behalf.

According to J.O. Sanders: "He who is successful in getting things done through others (delegation) is exercising the highest type of leadership"

2 simple questions to help us understand what delegation is:

- Do I want to share responsibility?
- Is there someone who can do that task?

d) Leaders who delegate wisely and properly can increase their ministry effectiveness. They have a desire to engage the right person and place them into a job that's a proper fit for them.

What do we look for when we want to delegate responsibilities to someone? (Exo 18:21)

²¹ *Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.*

- **Competence** – People with skills for a specific task. Different tasks require different gifts and skill sets. Must match specific task with specific abilities. Can't just choose anyone who is free and available
- **Character** – Must be faithful. The bulk of leadership qualities mentioned in Timothy and Titus has to do with godliness and character. Can't put "holy" tasks into "dirty hands"
- **Capacity to carry burdens** – Successful delegation is pictured in Exo 18:22- "They will make your load lighter..."
- Those you delegate responsibilities to must have a good degree of self discipline and self initiative to get tasks done without you having to constantly "chase after" them or to micro-manage them.
- A major key in delegation: People do what you inspect, not what you expect
- Must understand the difference between delegation and abdication

e) Successful delegation happens when:

- Specific instructions are given to able people who have authority to act and are responsible to report back and update

f) The “Don’ts” of delegation:

- Don’t delegate policy issues
- Don’t delegate if you are the only one who can do the job
- Don’t delegate your responsibility to oversee, motivate or shepherd your own people’s needs
- Don’t delegate to pass the buck or shirk responsibility

CONCLUSION

Viggo Olsen, who helped rebuild 10000 houses in war-ravaged Bangladesh in 1972, derived tremendous inspiration from reading Nehemiah 3:

“I was struck...that no expert builders were listed in the holy land brigade. There were priests, goldsmiths, perfume makers, and women, but no expert builders or carpenters were named...”

It was DL Moody who said: “The world has yet to see what God can do with a man totally dedicated to Him.”

Here we see what average people can do that are inwardly motivated and properly led. They accomplished an impossible task of rebuilding in 52 days what was broken down and in ruins for 140 years.