

LEADERS IN THE SCRIPTURES

God chooses very unlikely people to do His work. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:17-31 that our human wisdom and understanding would dictate something totally different that what God would choose. This is exemplified by many people in Scripture. The following study of some Biblical characters reveals some of their positive attributes. But first, let me share something which I heard in a course on leadership. Someone humorously imagined a letter from Jordan Management Consultants - probably you and I would have agreed with it had we lived there at that time! The proof of Jesus' superb success as a "leader" maker is the 12 apostles. But would we have had the same insight, patience, optimism and vision of what could be done with simple everyday type of individuals in such a short period of time? Would we have made something out of these men?

To: Jesus, Son of Joseph

Woodcrafters Carpenter Shop, Nazareth 25922

FROM: JORDAN MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS, Jerusalem 26544

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the 12 men you have picked for management positions in your new organisation. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

The profiles for all tests are included, and you will want to study each of the carefully. As part of our service and for your guidance, we make some general comments, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation and comes without an additional fee.

It is the staffs' opinion that most of your nominees are lacking a background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. **Andrew** has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, **James** and **John**, sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. **Thomas** demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to inform you that **Matthew** has been black-listed by the Greater Jerusalem Business Bureau. **James**, the son of Alphaeus and **Thaddaeus** definitely has radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. We recommend **Judas Iscariot** as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory. We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yours,

Jordan Management Consultants

Nehemiah the Leader

By Will Varner

Being a leader is an unenviable calling. It appears glamorous and glorious, but is more often lonely and thankless. The best training for a would-be leader is to observe closely the model of a proven leader. Seeing a leader in good times and bad times teaches far more than a book on leadership theory. We have the privilege of observing a good leader in action in the first six chapters of the Book of Nehemiah. Let's look at the events in these chapters and attempt to isolate some principles of good leadership from them.

The Leader's Concern for others - Nehemiah 1

The book opens with Hanani, a kinsman of Nehemiah, coming from distant Jerusalem to see Nehemiah. He brought news of destroyed walls, burned gates and distress among Jerusalem's inhabitants (vv. 4-11).

His emotional prayer acknowledges that the Israelites had sinned against the Lord and deserved their punishment, but he also claimed the Lord's promise to restore His people if they returned to Him in heart and deed. Nehemiah concluded his prayer by asking God to grant him favour as he appeared in the presence of Artaxerxes.

1. A leader draws on strength outside of himself. Nehemiah recognized that he was totally dependent on the Lord for success. Although unbelievers may be good leaders, those who humbly recognized their own limitations are more apt to find strength than are proud, self-made people.

2. A good leader identifies with those being led. Nehemiah confessed other people's sins as though they were his own (note the "we" in vv. 6-7). Although our culture stresses individuality, only leaders who identify with the failings, fears and triumphs of their people can lead them sensitively and effectively.

3. A good leader assumes responsibility for accomplishing his vision. By desiring to stand before the King, Nehemiah wanted to become part of the answer to his own prayer. There is an old saying, "pray as if everything depended on God; work as if everything depended on you." Only people who work in this dependent attitude find ultimate success in their labours.

The Leader and Organization - Nehemiah 2

In a respectful manner, Nehemiah placed his request before the king, which resulted in his being sent to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. However, Sanballat and Tobiah, two non-Jewish leaders of the area around Jerusalem, planned resistance to his endeavour. Nehemiah carefully inspected the walls of Jerusalem by night and urged immediate rebuilding. Geshem, an Arab, joined the opposition, and the seeds of difficulty that would be encountered later were planted.

1. A good leader carefully surveys the situation beforehand (vv. 11-16). While some tout organizational efficiency as the answer to all managerial problems, Nehemiah recognized that elaborate machinery running without the oil of the Spirit of God soon breaks down. If organization is simply defined as the orderly way to go about a task, Nehemiah certainly was organized ahead of time.

2. A good leader motivates people before delegating the work (vv. 17-18). Nehemiah's charges to Jerusalem's citizens contained four elements: a sense of identification; an acknowledgement of Jerusalem's plight; an appeal to a specific action; and a personal testimony. People do not follow programs but leaders who inspire them. They act when a leader stirs in them a hope of something greater than themselves - a hope to which they dare to aspire.

The Leader and the Work - Nehemiah 3-4

This passage clearly delineates the manner in which Nehemiah laid out the work before him (building the wall) by delegating tasks to specific groups. There were all kinds of workers: priests, Levites, Temple servants, goldsmiths, merchants, officials, private citizens, masters, servants, men and women. Some worked close to their homes while others served in an official capacity. Although some members of the aristocracy avoided the work (3:5), all who did work knew their assigned tasks and accepted responsibility for them.

The result was amazing. The work evidently proceeded with enthusiasm and harmony (4:6). Nehemiah had no military power to enforce his directions. His approach was to inspire a desire to work rather than enforce his own wishes. It is important to note that he also inspired others by engaging in the same sweaty, dirty work as everyone else (4:21, 23)

When rubble got in the way of the work, a major hindrance to the plan's progress emerged. Nehemiah, however, did not avoid difficulties or unpleasantness. He faced the problem of the rubble, hundreds laboured, without equipment, harassed by foes and plagued with setbacks and rebuilt a city wall in 52 days (6:15).

1. A good leader sees work as a means of achieving a specific goal. Good leaders are not workaholics. They work hard without being in bondage to work itself. All work is valued by its necessity in achieving the goal.

2. A good leader is not afraid to delegate work. If a leader does not delegate, it is either because he suffers from need to cling to power or because he cannot trust others. Thus, needed tasks do not get done, and people who could have carried them out grow bored and feel useless.

3. A good leader must be able to spot roadblocks and clear them. Therefore, real leaders have eliminated the tendency to procrastinate.

We often think that problems will eventually disappear if we ignore them. While this may be true in a few minor situations, those little stones may soon develop into mounds of rubble if they are too long ignored.

The Leadership and Personal Attacks - Nehemiah 6: 1-16

When the old enemies --Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem (2:19) -- heard that the wall was completed and the only task remaining was to set the doors in the gates, they attempted to halt the work, but in a subtle manner. The sole object of their hatred was Nehemiah himself. In their previous attacks they had focused in opposing the Jews' entire venture, but now they sought to remove Nehemiah from the scene or discredit his effectiveness as a leader.

Their first scheme was an assassination plot (vv. 1-4). They invited Nehemiah to a peace conference about 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah, however, suspected foul play and issued an oft-quoted response. He was involved in a great project and didn't believe that meeting with them was worth halting the work (vv. 3-4).

Their second scheme took the form of slander (vv. 5-9). They sent a letter supposedly revealing that Nehemiah was trying to set himself up as king of the Jews, thus threatening sedition against Artaxerxes. Nehemiah responded boldly, demonstrating his trust in God and his confidence in his position of strength (vv. 8-9).

Their third scheme was outright treachery (vv. 10-14). They tried to destroy his credibility by luring him into the Temple, even hiring a false prophet to issue a so-called message from the Lord to lend authority to the scheme. Nehemiah's discernment was evident when he recognized that no true prophet would ask someone to violate God's law - Only true

priests were allowed into the sanctuary (see Num. 3:10; 18:7). Once again he committed the matter to God in prayer (v. 14)

Finally, after 52 days of steady labour, the walls were completed. the enemies' self-confidence dissipated as they saw that the work was done with God's help. Opposing Him, they were fighting a losing battle.

1. A good leader is not discouraged by unjust personal attacks. Leaders recognized that they will not and cannot please everyone. With confidence in God and in their own position, good leader confidently fend off attacks and continue to move forward the completion of the goal.

2. A good leader sees a task through to its completion. So many leaders launch a multitude of projects only to let them fizzle by neglecting to follow up with those assigned to carry out the plans.

Those serving under such poor leaders recognize that it does not matter how hard they work because the project will probably never be completed.

Someone put forth years ago the oft-repeated observation, "To be a leader you must be a reader." There is no better place to learn about leadership than to read about the marks of an effective leader in the Book of Nehemiah.

If you would like to dig further into this subject, let me recommend two books for your consideration: **Hand Me Another Brick** by Charles Swindoll and **Spiritual leadership** by Oswald Sanders.

Nehemiah the Persistent Architect

- ✓ He determined the need.
- ✓ He sought the will of God.
- ✓ He was a **team builder** who enlisted others, organized the work and delegated the necessary authority to accomplish the task.
- ✓ He transmitted the vision to others and motivated others.
- ✓ His deep-rooted commitment to God's calling for him was essential to withstand his enemies and opposing forces.
- ✓ He set the example for the people to follow.
- ✓ He was a man who remained focused on the task. The goal was accomplished without compromise in 52 days!

Joshua, the Optimistic Commander-in-Chief

- ✓ He proved he was first a follower.
- ✓ He was a well-trying and prepared soldier, having Moses as his teacher and mentor.
- ✓ He was no defeatist or pessimist. In spite of what the majority of the group said, he was the man who said, "We can do it!"
- ✓ He knew God! He chose to follow and serve God. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- ✓ He believed in the power of God to accomplish the impossible.

Moses, the Mediating Chief Justice

Field Marshall Montgomery described Moses as the greatest leader that ever lived. Sir Winston Churchill said Moses was the greatest of the prophets who spoke in person to the God of Israel.

- ✓ He was a man of God, matched to the moment of God.
- ✓ He made mistakes.
- ✓ Although he had exceptional good education, he was ultimately trained in the solitude and loneliness of the desert. Often this is where the quality and fine-tuning of character occurs. He had to mature and ripen for the responsibility and moment of God.
- ✓ He was in constant touch with God.
- ✓ He was a very human man who learned to conquer his temptations and outgrow his weaknesses; he learned self-mastery.
- ✓ He admitted his weaknesses.
- ✓ He learned to use authority and power in a tolerant and responsible way.
- ✓ He had a forgiving heart.
- ✓ Little noticed about Moses' character was that he was the **"attorney" and "advocate"** of the people even though they "got under his skin" so often.

David, the Humble King

- ✓ He inspired affection; people identified with Him.
- ✓ He was a man of the People; he led from within the group.
- ✓ He was human and natural.
- ✓ He was vulnerable; the people saw a reflection of themselves in his weaknesses.
- ✓ He was courageous.
- ✓ He was sympathetic and understood the problems of others.
- ✓ He was a man of magnanimity, no hint of vindictiveness or personal triumph when his enemy finally fell.

- ✓ He was a man after God's own heart! What a crown to wear! In spite of many personal failures which had far-reaching consequences, **he always returned to the Lord he loved.**

Daniel, the Competent Spokesman

- ✓ He was a man of moral and physical power.
- ✓ He was mentally sharp, alert, teachable, and well-informed.
- ✓ He was not "hung-up" on whether a Christian should be part of the political life of the country - if God willed it, he did it!
- ✓ He was a man of discernment and good judgement.
- ✓ He worshipped his God in private and served His Creator in Public.
- ✓ He was proficient socially, and knew how to relate to others.
- ✓ Compromise or a "double standard" were not part of his lifestyle.
- ✓ He was spiritually and physically attractive.
- ✓ He was a **man who could not be "bought" - he was not "for sale"**
- ✓ He was able to stand alone.
- ✓ He was a man of faith and principles.
- ✓ He was a decision maker.
- ✓ He was a man of good habits and maintained good health.
- ✓ Although he was not popular, he had some close quality friends who provided encouragement and fellowship during his lonely times.

Sampson, the Tenacious Resistance Leader

- ✓ He accepted the task that God had matched for him.
- ✓ He was a man who did not surrender to the tides of drift, faint endeavour, or feeble impulse. He faced the real enemy with the power of the Spirit of God.
- ✓ He was very human.
- ✓ Although he tragically failed in careless conduct, he proved God's forgiveness and **made a comeback.**
- ✓ He knew the source of his strength - Almighty God - rather than believing he had the power alone.
- ✓ He knew his moment to act and went through with it.

Samuel, the Obedient Archbishop

- ✓ He prayed for his people.
- ✓ He was a reformer.
- ✓ He was a counsellor.
- ✓ He mixed with the people.
- ✓ He was a learner and respected the training of a leader
- ✓ He went along with God's subtle and wisely crafted plan to find and anoint David.
- ✓ He was an influencer and respected young people. However, he died before he could see how the young boy, David whom he anointed to become the chosen king of Israel, would reign.
- ✓ He had family problems.
- ✓ He was a man who could unite people, retaining their honour from their hearts and without demand. He was respected by the people.

Esther, the Courageous Mediator

- ✓ She was a woman of faith and moral courage
- ✓ She was a woman trained successfully by a mentor, Mordecai
- ✓ She was a woman who knew, felt and did the will of God under great risk.
- ✓ She was a woman gripped by the truth value of life and death.
- ✓ She understood the principle of continuity - **Concern for the next generation.**
- ✓ She was a woman who made a significant impact on her people.

Joseph, the forgiving Prime Minister

- ✓ He endured pressure and unpopularity.
- ✓ He was a man of godly conviction.
- ✓ He was man of sound judgement, shrewd and intelligent (Genesis 41:39-40)
- ✓ He was industrious and not afraid of hard work.
- ✓ He could dream, imagine and be creative.
- ✓ He was a first-class administrator, and a good organizer.
- ✓ He was a man of conviction.
- ✓ He learned by experience.
- ✓ He was **distinctively different.**
- ✓ He was a man that suffered even when he was right.
- ✓ Above all, he was a man of moral integrity.

Timothy, the Godly Equipper

- ✓ Timothy was weak physically, timid and shy.
- ✓ He was an ordinary individual through whom God did extra-ordinary things.
- ✓ He exemplified godly character in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.
- ✓ God was great, supreme, and sovereign to Timothy.
- ✓ He committed (truly delegated) the continuance of the ministry to competent men
[2 Timothy 2:2]

John the Baptist, the frugal Reformer

- ✓ He was a trailblazer for great men!
- ✓ He was bold, uncompromising, significant, meaningful voice influencing the moral, social and spiritual life of his country.
- ✓ He was **disgusted with the religiosity** of the day and had hard words even for the **bullying clergy of the day**.
- ✓ He wielded great influence, although he never had a "position" of power. influence was the result of his character that went to a deeper level than power. A man with both authority and profound humility, he could recognize the greatness of another - a rare combination these days.
- ✓ He humbly recognized the One to replace him.
- ✓ He was a man of simple lifestyle - materialism was not for him. he did not consider a high lifestyle was owed to him as so many clergy and so-called missionaries and Christian workers require today!
- ✓ He paid dearly for his godly convictions by being executed.

Simon Peter, the courageous Businessman

- ✓ Peter was a hard-working, prosperous fisherman who was made great by his master.
- ✓ Whenever Peter would fall, he would rise again.
- ✓ In spite of his compulsive, spontaneous verbiage, his hot-headedness, his impulsive and fiery nature, and all his failures, Simon Peter developed a personal relationship with his Lord.
- ✓ His strong, unmovable faith was an example for other disciples and converts after Jesus' resurrection and ascension.
- ✓ In spite of persecution, opposition and hardship, Peter's faith and deep commitment to his Lord were an anchor in the storms of life.
- ✓ Peter gave his life in martyrdom.

Apostle Paul, the Bold Missionary Explorer

- ✓ The Apostle Paul Knew keenly what it was like to be lonely, hungry and deprived of the essentials of life. He took beatings, persecution, dangers and all kinds of perils as a perpetual accompaniment in his ministry.
- ✓ He was a delegator.
- ✓ He truly had a saint's and pastor's heart.
- ✓ He was an equipper of others.
- ✓ He was one of the greatest strategists in Christian work since Christ walked this earth. He had an eye for the grand design, yet was a tactician with skill for detail. He had exceptional skill at being a dogmatist and a pragmatist combined.
- ✓ Paul never looked back.
- ✓ He was flexible, practical, reasonable and consistent. He had a sense of discretion and self-adaption. He had no class, colour, race or culture barriers. He was at home with **master or servant** and with men of different races and peoples. His strategy and tactics are hard to match!

Our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, our perfect Model Leader

- ✓ He received confirmation before He began to lead publicly.
- ✓ He challenged the process.
- ✓ He searched for opportunities.
- ✓ He envisioned the future.
- ✓ He had a following.
- ✓ He communicated vision to His disciples.
- ✓ He set goals.
- ✓ He enlisted others.
- ✓ He initiated actions
- ✓ He motivated, enabled and empowered others to action.
- ✓ He defined duties.
- ✓ He built a strong team.
- ✓ He established communication.
- ✓ He modelled the way. **He left a "legacy" for everyone throughout the ages to model.**
- ✓ He delegated responsibility
- ✓ He encouraged others
- ✓ He recognized individual contributions
- ✓ He was a servant of His father.

- ✓ He served the vision which came from the Father. The vision was to proclaim the kingdom.
- ✓ He served the persons around Him in obedience to His Father.
- ✓ He acknowledged the lives and contributions of those patriarchs of the Old Testament.
- ✓ He knew His following.
- ✓ He had courage in spite of opposition and the "bitter cup."
- ✓ He demonstrated that only truly strong leaders can be truly gentle.
- ✓ He placed human needs before the status quo, traditions and customs.
- ✓ He gave generously of Himself. He gave His all **for you and me**.
- ✓ He spoke the truth in love.
- ✓ He forgave others.
- ✓ He received power through obedience and service to the Father.
- ✓ He expressed anger in healthy ways.
- ✓ He transformed doubters into trusters.
- ✓ He faced and coped with much criticism.
- ✓ He prevented petty problem from becoming major problems.
- ✓ He knew that leaders are chose, equipped and empowered by God. He accepted the responsibility to discover and develop them.
- ✓ He was a discipler, mentor, and teacher, who trained people to do the same with others.
- ✓ He anticipated problems.
- ✓ He maintained wise control.
- ✓ He was people - oriented.
- ✓ He mediates for you and me.
- ✓ He left the Holy Spirit to be a counsellor, empower, guide, protector... for you and me.

Summary

What can we learn by a closer look at Jesus in terms of Christian Leadership?

1. Jesus received confirmation before He could lead. So we must.
2. Leaders acknowledge the giants who precede them.
3. Leaders know their followers.
4. In Christ's service the leader has courage.
5. Only truly strong leaders can be truly gentle.
6. Leaders place human needs before customs.
7. Leaders give generously.
8. Leaders speak the truth in love.
9. Leaders forgive because they have been forgiven.
10. Leaders receive their greatest power through obedience and service.
11. Leaders who are secure in Jesus Christ have nothing to protect.
12. Leaders express anger in healthy ways.
13. Leaders help doubter grow into trusters.
14. Only one leader was perfect - and they criticized Him too.
15. Wise leaders keep petty problems from becoming major problems.
16. Leaders are chosen and equipped by God; we have but to discover and develop them.
17. Leaders disciple others who become leaders who disciple others.
18. One true leader with God's help equals a strong majority [true synergism]

- Jesus was a servant of His father. [John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38]
- Jesus served the vision which came from the father which was to proclaim the Kingdom. [John 7:16]
- Jesus served the persons around Him in obedience to His Father [John 10:14,15,18]

Jesus' purpose and leadership strategy was to do His Father's will. His service was expressed out of His love and directed to those in need.

Not only history, but the Scriptures admonishes us to remember our former leaders that were successful, the supreme example being our Lord Jesus Christ Himself [Heb. 13:7-8]. As we hear more and more missions, churches and organizations crying for leaders. let's be sure that we imitate those men and women, - and yes, even young people - in the scriptures who were worthy of the name "LEADER".

We need a new committed group of disciples who show lives of faith, courage, tenacity, self-sacrifice.

We need those who are out for the well-being of people rather than putting programs and the accumulation of possessions in first place - leaders who keep true to the purpose for their existence here on earth.

When we turn to the Scriptures and especially to a study of Biblical leaders, we are not disappointed. **None of them were superhuman, and yet God used them.** Not only did they share our sinful nature, but we find among them examples of all of the fleshly weaknesses typical of fallen persons today - depression, hypersensitivity, inadequacy, anxiety and immaturity.

Like us, they experienced family problems, opposition from the world and criticism from church members as cruel as anything found today. Because they were human, they felt these pressures as acutely as any of us would. Elijah, one of the outstanding leaders of the Old Testament, was described by James as "a man of like nature with ourselves". (James 5:17). Paul too was aware that God had committed the gospel to very ordinary men when he wrote,

A Leader Characterized by:

Envisioning goals

Teaching values

Encouraging

Developing

Empowering

Inspiring

Transvisioning

Managing

Team Building

Developing Trust

Explaining

Serving

Representing

Renewing

Leadership Qualities

Confident in God

Courageous

Intuitive

Humble

Self-controlled

Humorous

Patient

Visionary

Wise

Energetic

Honest/Ethical

Just

Disciplined

Perseverant

Gentle

"We have this treasure in Jars of clay"

[2 Corinthians 4:7]

Are we preparing leaders who can consistently turn in superior performances, display an attitude of self-sacrifice, have a following, and lead not their own enrichment but for the benefit of those followers?

Jesus Christ, our Model Leader, exemplified this all the way. **We need to grasp the opportunity to serve others and lead them to work out their full potential to serve God and fulfil His plans for this needy world, and wait no longer.**

My friend Chester, told me of a recent survey in which persons 95 and over were asked, "What three things would you do differently if you had your life to live over again?" The participants of the survey almost unanimously came up with the following answer:

- I would reflect (think) more.
- I would risk more
- I would be sure to do something that would outlive me and would benefit others.

Shouldn't this be the desire of each one of us as leaders - **to leave a mark on history and to benefit those who followed us and to benefit the generations that**

followed ours after we have passed on? We are stewards of God's gifts and talents which He loans us and we will have to give an account as to what was accomplished in life and what was accomplished after death benefited others because of our use of these gifts and talents.

Jesus our Model Leader left His disciples to continue the work which He had began and provided the Holy Spirit to be the Resource they could count on to the next generation. we need to take the "touch" and pass it on to the next generation also - just as these leaders in the scriptures did to their next generations.