



INSIGHT FOR LIVING

PASTOR CHUCK SWINDOLL'S
TIMELESS LEADERSHIP LESSONS
FROM
Nehemiah

- 1** Leaders build spiritual walls of godliness and wisdom through spiritual discipline. If your own spiritual walls need repair, apply the following principles:
 - Develop a genuine concern for the condition of your walls
 - Pray for guidance and protection
 - Face the situation honestly and with determination until the task is finished
 - Recognize that we cannot correct the condition by ourselves
- 2** Leaders must exhibit a clear recognition of and concern for their calling, an offering of their projects to God, and an availability to meet the needs of their tasks. Most importantly, prayer is vital for leadership in four important ways:
 - Prayer makes us wait for God's timing
 - Prayer clears our vision for God's purpose
 - Prayer quiets our hearts for clear direction
 - Prayer activates our faith for decisive action
- 3** Leaders must both pray and prepare. Nehemiah illustrates the results of prayerful planning followed by decisive action. When questioned, he was ready with a well-thought-out plan. In doing so, he demonstrated four principles:
 - Changing the heart of decision-makers is God's specialty
 - Prayer and waiting go hand-in-hand
 - Prayerful waiting is not an excuse for disorder or a substitute for planning
 - Opposition to a plan often reinforces the will of God rather than hinders it
- 4** Leaders must be motivators. When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he faced the challenge of motivating the people to help rebuild the wall. He began by personally investigating the details of the project. Then, he motivated the people with timely words. Leaders motivate others by focusing on God:
 - Alone, in deliberate solitude for the purpose of planning
 - In public, with motivational words among the people
 - Under attack, with sharp rebukes before opponents and enemies
- 5** Leaders are guaranteed to face opposition. It's not only possible to stay at the task amid such attacks, but we can deepen our faith in God through the process. The way Nehemiah handled criticism is encapsulated in these principles:
 - Realize that it is impossible to lead without facing opposition
 - Respond to opposition by praying first
 - Recognize that prayer may need to be followed by decisive action
- 6** Leaders must combat discouragement. Loss of strength, vision, confidence, or security can cause any leader to be discouraged. Regardless of the causes, this fivefold cure can reenergize even the most dejected:
 - Unify people around the same goal
 - Direct people's attention to the Lord
 - Encourage people to maintain a balance
 - Provide people with a rallying point
 - Occupy people with service to others
- 7** Leaders need to handle finances with absolute integrity. Financial sin can topple businesses, ministries, governments, and families. Therefore, confronting wrongdoing head-on is essential. Nehemiah addressed financial misconduct by:
 - Determining to stop the wrong
 - Making specific plans to correct the wrong immediately, regardless of the sacrifice
 - Declaring his plans for correction in a promise before God
 - Realizing the seriousness of his promise



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Leaders who receive promotions or increased influence will encounter several tests of integrity. Nehemiah showed how to pass all the tests:

- Privileges: never misuse the benefits of a position for personal glory or gain
- Policies: reform corrupt policies and practices of the past
- Projects: never use a new position as an excuse to slack off
- People: never sacrifice people in pursuit of the project

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Leaders need God-given discernment to overcome trials of deception, gossip, intimidation, and rumors. Nehemiah's approach sets a good example:

- Calmly deny the charge; a loving rebuke is the best response
- Put the blame where it belongs; stop the rumor mill with facts
- Take your pain to God; seek comfort from the One who knows the truth

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Leaders must be concerned about their people's spiritual lives. Central to spiritual renewal is the faithful exposition of Scripture. The revival Nehemiah led reveals four practical lessons:

- No life is complete without a spiritual dimension
- No spiritual dimension is complete without scriptural input
- No scriptural input is complete without personal obedience
- No personal obedience is complete without great rejoicing

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Leaders need more than knowledge. They need insight. True spiritual insight comes from God through Scripture, and it leads to worship and celebration. Nehemiah's example demonstrates that gaining insight takes:

- Time: structured, scheduled, and consistent
- People: teachers, pastors, and mentors
- The right attitude: humility and teachability
- The right source: God's Word
- The right response: unquestioning obedience

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Leaders must bathe their people and projects in constant prayer. Even when the schedule gets crammed and the tasks stack up, keep praying. Nehemiah's prayer life provides a good example of "four-dimensional prayer":

- Look up in adoration and praise
- Look back with heartfelt thanksgiving for all God has done
- Look around at the present situation with petitions before the Lord
- Look ahead with commitment to future obedience

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Leaders must be willing to adjust their plans to face changing circumstances. When Nehemiah's role and responsibilities changed, he set a new course in writing for all to see. Three principles about establishing priorities emerge:

- Serious thought and planning must precede any significant change
- Written plans confirm right priorities, making them less likely to be forgotten
- Loss of distinction and conformity to the world go hand-in-hand

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Leaders must never overlook the "willing unknowns." Those who labor quietly and faithfully behind the scenes can encourage us in times of self-doubt. They remind us of these truths:

- A person's gift makes him or her valuable but not necessarily popular
- Every labor done in love is always remembered by God
- The final reward in heaven is based on personal faithfulness, not public applause

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Leaders must recognize a job well-done with celebration. Godly leaders must remember these four practical principles:

- An atmosphere of happiness should surround God's people
- Music is one of the most expressive ways to communicate joy
- A joyful spirit will have far-reaching effects on others
- Joy is not dependent upon outward circumstances but upon inward focus

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Leaders will always face problems like compromise, worldliness, and disobedience. Nehemiah faced such problems with honest observation, fearless conviction, and consistent devotion. His approach reveals four steps for handling these problems:

- Face the sin head-on; don't dodge necessary confrontation
- Condemn sin severely; don't be soft on serious matters
- Work toward a permanent correction; don't settle for a quick fix
- Follow up with prayer; don't hold the situation in your own hands

The principles summarized here are adapted from the sermon series, *Hand Me Another Brick: Timeless Lessons on Leadership*, a study of Nehemiah by Charles R. Swindoll. For more in-depth tools for equipping godly leaders, visit insight.org.

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