

LEADING LIKE JESUS 7

COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP

For the Church that will still be growing ten years from now, leadership development is the core issue. (John Wimber)

EXERCISE

In groups of four reflect back on the study you have made over the summer of either Nehemiah or Moses.

- Highlight the particular things which have impacted you, challenged and encouraged you from the life of this Biblical character.
- Are there ways in which you would like God to work out in your life some of the things he worked in and through the person you have studied?
- Spend a reasonable length of time praying for one another, laying on hands and asking the Holy Spirit to bring about some of these things in our lives.

One of the most noticeable leadership qualities demonstrated both by Moses and Nehemiah, and indeed by other Biblical leaders, is that of perseverance, the ability to press on even in the face of serious difficulty. Perseverance is about keeping going and keeping others going irrespective of circumstance or situation.

Perseverance/endurance is a key **NT** virtue **Mark 13:13, Heb 12:1-3**

- Effective leaders press on despite difficulties and equip others to do the game. They are able to maintain a sense of equilibrium and perspective even in the hard times.
- Effective leaders see through the illusion that comfort and ease are automatic signs of God's favour and the right of every faithful Christian servant. They understand that in the world we will have trouble (John 16:33) but equally that the world will not have the last word.

Specific Challenges to our Constancy in Leadership

1. Hardship 2 Corinthians 1:8

Situations which seem beyond our capability or competence

Feeling of being out of our depth, despite being in the place of God's appointing.

Under great pressure

Beyond human resources

Despaired even of life

In such situations, effective leaders increase their reliance on God. Indeed, hardship is that which serves like nothing else to throw us upon Him and to decrease our own sense of self-reliance.

2 Cor 1:9-10

Phil 4:12-13

2. Disappointment

- With other people and their failings **2 Corinthians 2:1-4**
We can feel let down by those we lead, those with whom we serve, and by those who lead us. **2 Tim 1:15, Acts 15:38,**
- With lack of fruit/progress **2 Cor 4:1-7**
- With God **1 Kings 19:1-11**
- With ourselves **Luke 23:62**

Effective leaders realise that God requires from us faithfulness rather than success.

The pain of failure can teach us lessons we would have no other way of learning. It may help us to be reminded that 95% of success is said to be built on failure. The first 50 years in the life of Winston Churchill have often been called 'A study in Failure'.

3. Difficulty/Opposition

2 Cor 4:8-12

2 Cor 6:8

It is good that at times we endure opposition and that we are evilly and untruly judged when our actions and intentions are good, because often these experiences promote humility and protect us from vainglory. For then we seek God's witness to our heart.' (Thomas a Kempis)

'God chooses what we go through. We choose how we go through it.'
(Victor Frankl, Holocaust survivor)

Romans 5:3-4

1 Thess 2:1-2

4. Demonic attack

Ephesians 6:10-20

Satan's attacks are usually subtle and always seek to undermine us, to throw us off course. The experience of Jesus in the wilderness should act as both a reassurance and an encouragement to act well when under such attack.

Courage is that quality of mind which enables people to encounter danger or difficulty with firmness, or without fear or depression of spirits. ..The highest degree of courage is seen in the person who is most fearful but refuses to capitulate to it. (J Oswald Sanders)

5. Success

Mark 6:45-6

Success can disrupt our spiritual equilibrium, undermining our sense of dependence upon God and leading us to become complacent and flabby. We are often most vulnerable to temptation, to taking our eye off the ball, when our ministry is prospering.

One of the most vital lessons to learn for the effective leader is that of dealing with 'success'.

Keys to Persevering

1. *Keeping a Gospel Vision*

Having a proper understanding of the strategic value of the work with which we are involved.

Nehemiah 6:1-4

2 Tim 2:10

2. *Maintaining an Eternal Perspective*

Living by Faith not by sight; trusting the promises of God

Fixing our eyes on what is unseen

2 Cor 4:18, Heb 12:28

2 Tim 1:12 2 Tim 4:18

3. *Being Spurred on by a Vision of what might be*

2 Cor 1:9-10, Romans 4:17

4. *Keeping company with others who will help us keep our eyes fixed upon God*

Heb 10:23-25

Perseverance is a corporate activity. Effective leaders work together and take responsibility for one another.

EXERCISE

Get into groups of 4. Take turns in trying to identify the issues or areas in which you personally feel most prone to stumbling or where your own ability to persevere is most severely tested. Pray for one another for God to strengthen and equip you.

Are there specific things you can resolve to do, or advise one another to do, in order to build your ability to triumph over difficulty?

PROJECT

Take time over the coming weeks to meditate on some of the Scriptures we have looked at this evening. Ask God to deepen in you an eternal perspective, the ability to live by faith rather than by sight.

Ian Parkinson, September 2007