

Nehemiah – Leadership Principles

Lesson 1 – Introduction

Leader Notes

Read or have others read the introductory paragraph below.

Dr. John Maxwell makes this statement about leadership “Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less.” (*Developing the Leader Within You*) Leadership is not confined to those who are at the head of some company or organization. Virtually everyone is in a leadership position at sometime in their life.

1. Name some leaders (including children) that are a part of your life.

This will vary and accept the answers with thanks. Make sure that people of all walks and stations of life are included.

2. What are ways they exhibit leadership traits?

This will vary and accept the answers with thanks.

Read or have others read the paragraphs below.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah together record how the Babylonian captivity, the tomb of Israel’s national identity, became the womb of its rebirth.

The Assyrians invaded Israel (Northern Kingdom) in 738 BC. The Assyrian Empire practiced cross-deportation (e.g., 2 Ki. 17:24). That meant that they took some Israelites to Assyria and replaced the Judeans with non-Israelites. Assyria’s goal was to establish economically productive provinces throughout the realm.

Babylon invaded Judah (Southern Kingdom) in 605. The Babylonians did not follow the Assyrian model. Their policy may be likened to slash and burn. The demographic movement was one way: the Judeans were expelled from their homeland and moved to the heartland of the empire. Babylonians did not invest time or effort in creating productive provinces. Rather, they engaged in military campaigns in those regions to secure tribute and support construction in their urban centers, period. Babylon removed only members of certain specialized or elite classes: for example, royalty, warriors, skilled workers, and scribes (see 2 Ki. 24:14, 16).

3. Why were both Israel and Judah led into captivity?

They had run after other gods.

4. How would Babylon's policy affect Judah?

It would leave the country with people who were poor and of little status. They were a very defenseless country.

Read or have someone read the paragraph below.

The drama of Israel's restoration opens 60 years before Ezra appears on the scene. In 538 BC, when Jerusalem had been in ruins for half a century, a large contingent of exiles returned to the homeland. Prominent figures in the early period included the two governors, Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, and the high priest Jeshua (Ezra 1:8; 2:2). In their second year the people were ready to begin rebuilding the temple (3:8) but it took over 20 difficult years before the returnees were able to complete it

5. Why was it necessary to have at least some Jews be present in Judah?

Judah was where the promised Savior was to be born. He was also to be born a Jew.

Read or have someone read the paragraphs below.

The next recorded events are Ezra's return to Jerusalem almost 60 years later and his vigorous campaign against mixed marriages, "for Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and teach His statutes and rules in Israel" (7:10).

After another interval of 12 years, Nehemiah received permission from the Persian king to investigate reports that the repatriated exiles were "in great trouble and shame" (Neh.1:3). On arrival in Jerusalem, he at once set to work to make the city safe against attacks from the outside.

Apparently recalled by the king, Nehemiah left Jerusalem. When later he returned, he found it necessary again to correct abuses that had crept in during his absence.

612 Babylonians and Medes conquer Assyria

605 The Babylonians invade Judah & 1st wave of deportation to Babylon (Daniel)

601 Judah decides to realign itself with Egypt, Jeremiah warns

597 Babylonians capture Jerusalem & 2nd wave of deportation to Babylon (Ezekiel)

593 Ezekiel begins to prophesy

587 The Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple

586 Jerusalem's walls and gates are burned with fire & 3rd wave of Jews deported

539 The Fall of Babylon and Beginning of the Persian Period to 332
538 The Decree of Cyrus II allowing Jews to return
516 The Jews rebuild their Temple (70 years)
458 Ezra arrives in Jerusalem
445 Nehemiah leads work on walls of Jerusalem
432 Alexander defeats Persia
17 Roman Empire begins

6. Look at the timeline above. What does that tell us about how God is in charge of world events?

God's plan to save the world are not deterred by powerful and wicked nations.

7. How is that comforting for us in our society?

We need not fear anything or any evil power because God is in charge of the world.

Read 1:1-4: In what setting does Nehemiah find himself.

Date – **November-December, 446 B.C**

Site – **Susa, one of the Persian capital cities, located in what is now southern Iran. Persian kings used Susa as a winter residence.**

Reporters – **These men may have been an official delegation from Jerusalem or they may have come for family or business purposes.**

Judah Situation – **It seems that Nehemiah learned of conditions in Jerusalem simply by making a casual inquiry. He was shocked to hear of the appalling situation there. Apparently he had assumed that since the mission of Ezra about 12 years earlier everything was fine. He had underestimated the persistence of Israel's enemies and the continued physical and spiritual weakness of the returnees. Nearly 100 years after the return under Zerubbabel Jerusalem still was not a secure city. Either the walls never been rebuilt at all or whatever work had been done had been undone by Israel's enemies. Even the restored temple, so vital to the nation, was exposed and easy prey to enemies. The people were demoralized.**

Nehemiah's Reaction – **Sitting down was the usual posture when a person "wept and mourned." Fasting involved refraining from food. It was meant to heighten feelings of shame and self-denial and to enhance humble prayer.**

