

# NEHEMIAH: PATTERN FOR LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE IN HARD TIMES

## Part V: Godly Leadership's Handling Of Abuses Between Subordinates

(Nehemiah 5:1-19)

### I. Introduction

- A. It is easier for a leader to face personal opposition and persecution for his actions than it is for him to handle mutually inflicted abuses between subordinates. In the former case, he can control **his** reaction to the abuser and so neutralize **half** of the conflict. In the latter case, sinful actions and "knee-jerk" vengeance reactions are **totally** between **others**, so he cannot quickly annul **either** half of the strife!
- B. Nehemiah faced this difficult challenge within the group, and the way he handled it instructs us today!

### II. Godly Leadership's Handling Of Abuses Between Subordinates, Nehemiah 5:1-19.

- A. Nehemiah faced the problem of internal conflicts between his subordinates, Neh. 5:1-5:
  - 1. A cry arose from within the ranks of those helping Nehemiah rebuild the city wall, Neh. 5:1.
  - 2. The cry represented complex abuses that had occurred between subordinates as follows:
    - a. The work on the wall apparently kept some people from taking adequate care of their fields so that they lacked food, Neh. 5:2, Bib. Know. Com., O.T., p. 683.
    - b. Others obtained grain, but at the price of mortgaging their crop lands to get it, v. 3.
    - c. Others flatly borrowed cash from fellow Jews to pay the Persian tax; however, the latter charged high interest, leading to bankruptcy and slavery of the borrowers' children, Neh. 5:4-5.
- B. Nehemiah's response to this cry instructs us on overcoming abuses between subordinates, Neh. 5:6-19:
  - 1. Nehemiah appropriately felt outrage at the injustices, being sensitive to justice as a leader, v. 6.
  - 2. However, he consulted with **himself before taking any action** to be **constructive**, Neh. 5:7a:
    - a. Consulting with himself allowed Nehemiah time to cool down so he would not be destructive with his anger against the fledgling group of straggling, returned Hebrew exiles, Ibid.
    - b. Consulting with himself allowed Nehemiah time to view the facts in proper perspective, Ibid.
    - c. Consulting with himself allowed Nehemiah opportunity to plan a constructive course of action, Ibid.
  - 3. Nehemiah **then** properly confronted the wrongdoers head on as follows, Neh. 5:7b:
    - a. He used **Scripture** to show their **sin** in exacting interest from fellow Hebrews, 7c with Ex. 22:25.
    - b. He used **logical argument** to show the error of their ways. Nehemiah reminded the wrongdoers that he had actually purchased the freedom of many of these now enslaved countrymen so they could be free; thus, their abusing this liberation made Nehemiah's redemption pointless, Neh. 5:8!
    - c. He shared his concern over a **bad group testimony** in the wrong: Gentiles were apt to reproach them and their God if they continued abusing one another with slavery, a bad testimony, v. 9!
  - 4. Nehemiah suggested a constructive **solution** to the wrongs: he urged the slave owners to return earnest moneys and forgive interest on the loans so that borrowers could pay of their borrowed principals, 10.
  - 5. Nehemiah then used the influence of **public admonishment**: he called an assembly and verbally admonished the people to repent or suffer God's discipline, Neh. 5:13a! It worked, v. 13b!
  - 6. Nehemiah backed all of these efforts up with the **influence** of **personal example**, Neh. 5:10, 14-19:
    - a. Nehemiah exemplified his cause by **loaning** money and grain to the needy **himself**, Neh. 5:10
    - b. He exemplified his cause by **refusing** to take his **just due salary** to ease others' burdens, 14-15.
    - c. He **personally worked** on the **wall** like he expected all the others to do, v. 16a.
    - d. He **did not buy land** lest it took from the equities of needy Jews around him, v. 16b.
    - e. He made sure that **his servants worked** on the **wall** as well, providing a corporate example, v. 16c.
    - f. He **shared** his **daily food rations** as governor with **150** people to ease the cash shortage, v. 17-18.
  - 7. Nehemiah committed to God what it cost him to do these things to settle these internal problems, v. 19!

***Lesson: Godly leaders handle abuses between subordinates by (1) noting the injustices, (2) by restraining their own responses until they can constructively guide the group, (3) by confronting wrongdoers with Scripture, with logic and with goals affecting the group as a whole, (4) by suggesting workable solutions, (5) by admonishing in public assembly, (6) by influencing others to follow by costly personal example and (7) by letting God remunerate them for the personal costs of leading this way!***