

1. Leaders are made.

Vince Lombardi was a leader. He was the coach of the great Green Bay Packers football team, which he led to numerous national championships during his coaching tenure. He knew that leaders are made and said this about it:

“Leaders are made, they are not born; and they are made just like anything else has ever been made in this country- by hard effort. And that’s the price that we all have to pay to achieve that goal, or any goal.

And despite what we say about being born equal, none of us really are born equal, but rather unequal. And yet the talented are no more responsible for their birthright than the underprivileged. And the measure of each should be what each does in a specific situation.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to be tolerant of a society which has sympathy only for the misfits, only for the maladjusted, only for the criminal, only for the loser. Have sympathy for them help them, but I think it’s also time for us to stand up for and to cheer for the doer, the achiever, one who recognizes a problem and does something about it, one who looks for something extra to do for his country, the winner, the leader!” [Page 16]

2. First Things First.

In one of Peter Drucker’s books on leadership, there is a chapter entitled “First Things First.” It concerns priorities, as one might suspect from its title, and it introduces what the author rightly calls one great “secret” of effectiveness: “Effective executives do first things first and they do one thing at a time.” This is a good principle, of course. In fact, it is two principles: 1) establishing priorities and 2) managing time effectively. [Page 21]

3. Prayer

... made Abraham Lincoln the man he was, and for the same reason. He said on one occasion, “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of those about me seemed insufficient for the day.” [Pages 21-22]

4. Humility.

Here is a secret of true leadership. A true leader is not so much aware of the talents or gifts he has that others do not have as he is of the fact that he is as weak and as capable

of sin as anyone. It is when leaders forget their sinfulness that they fall into sin and lose their leadership ability. [Page 24]

5. Loyalty.

To be loyal does not mean that we are to appear loyal when we are actually opposed to what is happening, or that we are loyally to support wrong actions. It merely means that as long as we are working for someone we must be loyal to him. If we cannot be loyal, we should seek employment elsewhere. [Page 34]

6. Don't Anger.

Dale Carnegie said, "If you want to gather honey, don't kick over the beehive. [Page 36]

7. Keep in Touch with Leadership.

This is very important. A good leader is willing to have those who work under him develop their own programs, but he does not want to be surprised by the plans of subordinates, and understandably so. Subordinates want their own plans to succeed, but the boss is responsible not only for the subordinate's plan but also for the success of the entire operation. He needs to know what is going on and to be able to approve, disapprove, or redirect those plans according to the larger picture.

Here is a secret: If you want to succeed with your boss, don't surprise him. Be creative, but be sure he is with you as you plow along. [Page 37]

8. Not Distracted.

There is a story involving Yogi Berra, the well-known catcher for the New York Yankees, and Hank Aaron, who at that time was the chief power hitter for the Milwaukee Braves. The teams were playing in the World Series, and as usual Yogi was keeping up his ceaseless chatter, intended to pep up his teammates on the one hand, and distract the Milwaukee batters on the other. As Aaron came to the plate, Yogi tried to distract him by saying, "Henry, you're holding the bat wrong. You're supposed to hold it so you can read the trademark." Aaron didn't say anything, but when the next pitch came he hit it into the left-field bleachers.

After rounding the bases and tagging up at home plate, Aaron looked at Yogi Berra and said, "I didn't come up here to read." He knew his goal, and he did not allow Berra to distract him. [page 38]

9. Plan with Information.

To have a workable plan, it is not necessary to have all information but it is necessary to have the necessary information and then formulate a wise plan with it.

Arnold Toynbee, the great English historian, said, "Apathy can only be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal which takes the imagination by storm, and second, a definite intelligible plan for carrying that ideal into practice." [Page 49]

10. Give a Challenge.

Dale Carnegie tells of a mill manager whose men were not producing. The owner, whose name was Charles Schwab, asked why. The manager had no idea. "I've coaxed the men; I've pushed them; I've sworn and cursed; I've threatened them with damnation and being fired. But nothing works. They just won't produce."

"How many heats did your shift make today?" Schwab asked. "Six" was the answer.

Without saying another word, Schwab picked up a piece of chalk and wrote a big figure 6 on the floor. Then he walked away.

When the night shift came in, they saw the 6 and asked what it meant. "The big boss was here today," someone said. "He asked how many heats the day shift made, and we told him six.

He chalked it on the floor."

The next morning Schwab walked through the mill again. The night shift had rubbed out the 6 and replaced it with an even bigger 7. When the day shift reported the next day, they saw the 7. So the night shift thought it was better than the day shift, did it? They'd show them. They pitched in furiously, and before they had left that evening they had rubbed out the 7 and replaced it with a 10. It was a 66 percent increase in just twenty-four hours, and all because of Schwab's challenge.

Carnegie concludes, "If you want to win.... spirited men... to your way of thinking...throw down a challenge." [Page 51]

11. Keep People Informed

...of what is happening. It is said of Martin Luther that one reason he was successful in leading the Reformation was that he kept the German people informed of what was happening and what he was doing at each stage. [Page 55]

12. Jealousy.

...is a cause of disharmony among leaders in the Christian church, though it is usually disguised as a doctrinal or ecclesiastical disagreement. One will attack another because

“he is wrong in his eschatology” or because “he associates with liberals,” but the real cause is jealousy of the other man’s success. [Page 74]

13. Confidence in the Team.

Theodore Roosevelt, a remarkable American president, said to leaders, “The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.” [Page 122]

14. Proper Use of the Lord’s Day.

In my opinion, Christians are not under the specific Sabbath laws of the Old Testament. We have been delivered from keeping “special days and months and seasons and years” (Gal 4:10). But that is not the whole story. True, we have not been commanded to observe an inactive Sabbath. But we have been given a new day, the Lord’s Day, to enjoy. Our day is not a sober day of withdrawal. It is a day of active, joyful worship. But do we actually enjoy it as such? Do we use it for worship, Christian service, and witness? Or do we only pretend to do it, spending a few formal moments in church in order to be free to spend the rest of the day watching football or merely lounging around? [Page 166]

16. God’s People to Support God’s Work.

The government may provide certain advantages to churches and other “charitable” organizations, but we cannot expect government to support them. Nor should it. If Christians do not support the Lord’s work, the Lord’s work will not be supported. [Page 167]

17. Godly Character Needed.

A strong religious commitment is essential if a democratic form of administration is to succeed. Without adequate spiritual values it is hard, if not impossible, to retain the idea of obligation and responsibility. Individualism cannot long be held in check by the concept of a calling embodying good works and self-restraint. When this control is weakened, legislation takes the place of spiritual convictions and becomes the foundation of the community. And with the increase in legislation there is a corresponding increase in bureaucracy with a minimizing of efficiency and a diminution of personal worth. -- Cyril Barber [Page 178]

18. We Are a Community.

When the Stranger says: “What is the meaning of this city? Do you huddle close together because you love each other?” What will you answer? “We all dwell together to make money from each other?” or “This is a community”?

Chorus from “The Rock” The great twentieth-century poet T.S. Eliot [Page 181]

19. Justice, Mercy, and a Humble Walk.

What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

That verse lists three requirements. First, to act JUSTLY. This means justice for all, not just for Christians or for our pet projects. It means justice for the Jew and the Catholic, the homosexual, the poor and the rich, the utterly destitute. Justice is impartial. It means acting justly, not just talking about justice. It means acting justly ourselves and not just expecting other people to do it.

Second, to love MERCY. This does not mean that we should merely act in a compassionate way from time to time, still less only to those who are like us or not much worse off than us. It means trying to show mercy always and in all possible ways. The activities of city Christians can be just and merciful at the same time.

Third, to WALK HUMBLY with God. We especially need to hear this since often Christians are anything but humble. Instead of working with others in a genuinely humble manner, we act as if we already have all the answers (which we do not) and thus rightly cause the secular world to scorn us. [Page 182]

20. To Inspire.

Nehemiah inspired a defeated and dispirited people. Not only was the objective itself overwhelming but Nehemiah also had to cope with a people who had tried to build the walls before, had failed, and were now dispirited. There had been nearly a century of defeat. The people had settled down into accepting things as they were. Somehow Nehemiah inspired this dispirited people to believe the job could be done.

This is the area in which a leader shows whether or not he really is a leader. If a leader cannot inspire, people will not follow. If they do not follow, the leader is a leader in name only. Nehemiah was not only a leader nominally. He really led the people, and his leadership began by his success in inspiring them to believe that what he had come to Jerusalem to accomplish was possible—and that it was possible through them. [Page 189/190]

21. Overcoming Opposition.

The final three forms of opposition again came from the people’s external enemies, Sanballet and Tobiah among others. These differed from the first types of opposition in that they were directed against Nehemiah personally. A plot was hatched which was intended to compromise him. A rumor campaign was started. Finally there was an

attempt at outright intimidation. Nehemiah overcame these attacks through five great qualities: (1) he was close to God, (2) he had a strong sense of God's calling, (3) he had a healthy sense of his own abilities and worth, (4) he had discernment, and (5) he had courage. God used these qualities to see him through the attacks of his enemies and enable him to press forward to victory. [Page 190]

22. Secret of Spiritual Success.

In the eighth chapter of 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul is writing about the surprising generosity of the Christians in Macedonia, asking how they had managed to be so generous when they were actually quite poor. His explanation is that "they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will" (v5). That is a secret for spiritual success: to give ourselves to God first, and then to others. [Page 191]

23. Dedication.

What is a dedication? The word comes from the Latin verb *do, dare, dedi, datum*, which means "to offer" or "to give." When an object is dedicated—to the Lord, for example—it means it is given to him for his control and use. When a person dedicates herself or himself to God, it is for the same reason. [Pg 192]

24. The Joy of the Lord.

If the joy of Nehemiah's Jerusalem seems alien and Paul's unnatural, it is simply a measure of the difficulty experienced by a rich western world in finding well-being in godliness itself. What Nehemiah and Paul knew—in direct contrast to the modern doctrine that he who acquires most and succeeds best is happiest—is that joy, like love, peace, self-control, etc. (cf. Gal 5:22), is spiritual. [Page 196-197]

25. Joy and Work.

The times of rejoicing, though important, are not ends in themselves but are meant to be additional ongoing moments in the lives of those who have given themselves to God. Rejoice in God? Of course! We above all other people should rejoice in God. In fact, only those who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ have any real and deep cause for rejoicing. But that is not all we have to do. We have work to do too, and we must get on with it. [Page 197]

26. Consistent Perseverance.

[Abraham Lincoln] was born in 1809 and suffered his first major defeats in 1832, a year in which he lost his job and was defeated in his first political race, a bid for the state legislature. The next year, 1833, he failed in business. In 1835 his childhood sweetheart died. In 1836 he had a nervous breakdown. In 1843 he was defeated in a bid for the United States Congress. In 1848 he tried again and was again defeated. In 1849

he decided to become a land officer but was rejected. In 1854 he was defeated in a race for the United States Senate. In 1856 he lost a nomination for the vice presidency. In 1858 he was again defeated in a race for the Senate.

A list of defeats like this would be enough to discourage any man, but he said, "I will always do my best no matter what.. .and someday my chance will come." One day it did. In 1861, Abraham Lincoln became the sixteenth president of the United States.

Perseverance! It is a mark of true leadership. Sir Winston Churchill, another great leader, once said, "Never, give up. Never, never, never give up." It could have been a summary of the life of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah did not have the series of defeats in his life by which Abraham Lincoln was proved and strengthened. But he would have understood at once what Lincoln and Churchill believed about perseverance. Nehemiah was a whirlwind leader, as we have seen. But he did not merely do his own thing and then move on to be remembered no more. On the contrary, he kept fighting his battles to the very end. One commentator says, "To the end of his days Nehemiah retained the same zeal that mobilized the Jews to rebuild the walls and that made him intervene earlier to abolish exploitation of the poor. Nehemiah was not a flash-in-the-pan leader but one who remained as long as he lived, consistent to his original vision."²

[Page 200-202] (John White, *Excellence in Leadership: Reaching Goals with Prayer, Courage and Determination*, InterVarsity Press)

27. Old Man Working.

The significant thing is that Nehemiah was now considerably older. He must have been at least forty when he left Susa for Jerusalem the first time. The end of his first governorship would have brought him to the age of fifty-two, and if we are now in the years 425 to 420 B.C., Nehemiah must have been near sixty-five. This is the age at which most people today retire. But Nehemiah did not retire. In chapter 15 we see him returning to Jerusalem and achieving some of his most important victories. [Page 203]

28. Righteous Anger.

It is possible to be wrongly angry...That is often the case when a wrong only against ourselves is involved. We can be wrong if we do nothing more than get angry. Righteous anger, the kind God approves of, always acts to correct the injustice. But wrong anger is not our major problem in today's Christianity. The bigger problems are compromise and cowardice. John White says:

In Christian work our cowardice in avoiding unpleasantness is currently doing more damage than any damage from irascibility on the part of Christian leaders. And what irascibility we do give way to is usually verbal. It wounds without correcting. The church has become flabby, old womanish, inept, unwilling to act. Discipline should be

reconciliatory and loving, but it should take place. And on the whole it doesn't... .Who are we —who condone every manner of evil in our midst—to criticize one of those rare leaders who does not hesitate to act when the integrity of God's temple is in question?
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