

# How Do Good Leaders Exercise Their Authority in The Service of Others?

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*There are two kinds of leaders in the world. There are selfish leaders who use their position for their own benefit, and there are selfless leaders whose desire is purely to serve others.*

I hate to admit it, but as a young manager, I was a pretty selfish leader. I was focused on what was good for me and my career. My salespeople and coworkers were tools to help advance my own interests.

After becoming a Christian, I realized this was not the kind of leader God wanted me to be. I needed to change from being a selfish leader to being a selfless leader. That's when I realized that good leaders, Godly leaders, exercise their authority in the service of others!

One great example of a Godly leader we can all learn from is Nehemiah—he exercised his authority in the service of others in three ways.

## 1. Good Leaders Leverage Their Authority

Nehemiah was born into captivity in Babylon, but as a young man, he rose to the powerful position as cupbearer to the king. As cupbearer, Nehemiah had close contact with and served as a senior advisor to the king.

Nehemiah heard about the desperate situation of his countrymen back in Jerusalem. Instead of ignoring the reports, Nehemiah leveraged his authority to secure permission from the king to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city.

## 2. Good Leaders Do Not Separate Themselves from Their Followers

Nehemiah was safe and living the good life with the king of Persia in Suza, some 1,550 miles from Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1). Yet, when he heard about the troubles of his people back in Judah, he wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed for days.

Nehemiah *cared* about his people; He identified with their sin and the problems sin created in their lives. Then, he developed a plan for how he could use his position and relationship with the king to help his people.

## 3. Good Leaders Do Not Take Advantage of Their Position

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he had to deal with the rich and powerful, and the poor and weak (Nehemiah 5). He found the rich and powerful were exploiting the poor and

weak. He immediately confronted the rich people and convinced them to return ill-gotten gains to the poor.

After putting a stop to the mistreatment of the poor, Nehemiah set an example for the other leaders in Jerusalem by lending money without interest, giving generously, and foregoing the benefits he was entitled to as the leader of the people.

Instead of using his authority to take advantage of the people, Nehemiah used his position to serve the people's interests.

#### **4. Good Leaders Serve Others**

Whenever I am in a position where I need to assess a leader's effectiveness, the most important attribute I consider is whether the leaders exercise their authority to serve others.

- Instead of ignoring bad situations, do they leverage their position of authority to help others?
- Instead of separating themselves from difficult situations, do they empathize with the needs of others and take action to help?
- Instead of using their position to take advantage of others, do they use their authority to ensure people are treated justly and set an example for others to follow?

If leaders selfishly use their authority to serve themselves, they are a danger to the people and the organization. A leader who uses their authority in the service of others will build a robust and loyal organization.