I. THREE ADVANTAGES OF LEADERSHIP

* POSITION - to be more

* POWER - to do more

* PRIVILEGE - to have more

"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" 1 Cor. 10:12

II. THREE TEMPTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

1. YOU WILL BE TEMPTED TO ______________________________

"The early governors placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shackles of silver from them in addition to food and wine." (vs. 15a)

2. YOU WILL BE TEMPTED TO ______________________________

"Their assistants also larded it over the people" (vs. 15b)

(LL) LEADERSHIP IS NOT ______________________________

3. YOU WILL BE TEMPTED TO ______________________________

"the Governor's Food Allowance" (vs. 14, 18)

The Mark of An Uncommon Leader:

"BUT I DID NOT ACT LIKE THAT!" (vs. 15c)
III. HOW TO KEEP YOUR INTEGRITY AS A LEADER

1. DEEPEN _____________________________________________
   "Out of reverence for God I did not act like that." (vs. 15c)

   * Realize God ______________________________

   "For promotion and power come from nowhere on earth, but only from God. He promotes one and deposes another.” Ps. 75:6 (LB)

   * Realize God ______________________________

   "Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God...?” (vs. 9)

   Prov. 1:7, 2 Cor. 5:11, Gen. 39:9

   "Obey your spiritual leaders and be willing to do what they say. For their work is to watch over your souls and God will judge them on how well they do..." Heb. 13:17 (LB)

   "...submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you.” Heb. 13:17 (NIV)

   (LL) THERE IS NO AUTHORITY WITHOUT ________________________________.

   "... we who are teachers will be judged with greater strictness than others." James 3:1 (GN)

2. DEVELOP _____________________________________________

   Examples: vs. 6, 17-18

   (LL) LOSERS FOCUS ON WHAT THEY ____________
   LEADERS FOCUS ON WHAT THEY ____________

   "David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skill he led them.” Ps. 78:72

   (Paul) "Because of our love for you, we were ready to share with you not only the Good News but even our own lives. You were so dear to us!” 1 Th. 2:8 (GN)
3. DISCIPLINE YOURSELF FOR ______________________________

______________________________.

"Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done for these people." (vs. 19)

1 Cor. 9:1-27

(LL) LOSERS FOCUS ON THEIR RIGHTS, LEADERS FOCUS ON THEIR

______________________________

"Moses preferred to suffer with God's people rather than to enjoy sin for a little while ... because he kept his eyes on the future reward." Heb. 11:24-25 (GN)

"God ... will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." Heb. 6:10

"to the elders... Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing ... not greedy for money but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." 1 Peter 5:2-4

Matt. 25:23
Nehemiah 5. We're only going to look at six verses, a brief section but a very important section.

Do you think it's easier handling success or failure? Thomas Caryle once said, "For every one hundred people who can handle adversity there is only one who can handle prosperity." I think most people can't handle being at the top. It changes them. In fact, success destroys some people.

There are three advantages of leadership:
- Position -- you can become more
- Power -- you can do more
- Privilege -- you can have more

These are legitimate benefits of leadership. The extra effort and work you put in you get more position, more power and more privilege. With each one of these comes a very great temptation that can be your downfall as a leader if you misuse it. I Cor. 10:12 "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!"

We're going to look at the temptations of leadership, an appropriate thing if you read the newspaper. The three greatest nations of the world are in turmoil because of the abuses of leadership. In China: students marching because of corruption in the Chinese leadership. In the Soviet Union: protesting; in the supreme soviet there are people who have got in because of positions of favor and given positions on the soviet because they catered up to certain people. Tonight in the newspaper, the third most powerful man in our nation resigned, the Speaker of the House. Why? Conflict of interest and misuse of privilege the same things we're going to talk about tonight. In the Reagan administration there were over 200 government officials that left office because of ethical problems. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Today we're going to look at the temptations of leadership and the antidote.

The background of this is that Nehemiah is now the governor of Judah. In v. 14 he tells us that he has been the governor there for 12 years. He identifies the fact that the governors before him were different, they misused their power, they misused their privilege, they misused their position.

THREE TEMPTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

1. You will be tempted to misuse your position.

These former governors made unrealistic demands. "The early governors placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shackles of silver from them in addition to food and wine." They overtaxed the people, they made unrealistic demands. They are unsympathetic to the situation. Last week we saw they were in the middle of a famine and they had had tough times there. Once these men came to power, they abused their position.
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Have you ever seen anyone get a promotion at work and they suddenly become a little dictator? It changes them. They're a nice guy until they get the promotion. Then all of a sudden they start treating everybody demeaningly, derogatorily, making excessive demands on people. Unrealistic demands demoralize people.

2. You will be tempted to abuse your power.

v. 15 "Their assistants also lorded it over the people." It was an oppressive leadership style. Autocratic. Even the servants, it says, became little dictators. They were blatantly using their power. There is a difference between being a boss and being a leader. These guys had been given the position of leadership but they were misusing the position and abusing the power. How many of you like to work for a domineering leader? They never take time to explain why they've asked you to do something. The favorite phrase of a domineering leader is "You do it because I've said so!"

Leadership Law: Leadership is not lordship.

3. You will be tempted to profit from your privileges.

Twice in this passage it uses the phrase, "the governor's food allowance." Evidently the governor had a right to a certain amount or unlimited expense account. But they were misusing it.

An American Express commercial, "Membership has its privileges." So does leadership. Usually they're paid more, more benefits, more freedom with their schedule, expense account. Many people can't handle that.

Notice Nehemiah says in v. 15 "I did not act like that." He is an uncommon leader. He's a nonconformist. He did not follow the expected pattern. They'd had all of these governors that had come in and ripped everybody off and Nehemiah comes it and he didn't rip anybody off. Why?

v. 14 "I was governor there for twelve years." While he was there we learn these facts: He never took a salary, he never used an expense account, he refused to levy taxes, he refused to buy land for profit, he paid his servants from his own personal income to do public work, he daily fed over 150 people at his own personal expense. He's saying "I didn't take any money and I didn't make any money." How many politicians do you know who could pass up the opportunity to gain? What was Nehemiah's secret? What kept him from abusing his power and position and privilege?

HOW TO KEEP YOUR INTEGRITY AS A LEADER

1. DEEPEN MY REVERENCE FOR GOD

Nehemiah wanted to please God more than he wanted to please himself. He says "out of reverence for God I did not act like that." What does it mean to reverence God? It means two things:
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1) I realize God put me in this position. Nehemiah had never forgotten that it was God who sent him back to Jerusalem. God gave him a project. He never forgot that God had put him there. Psalm 75:6 "For promotion and power come from nowhere on earth, but only from God. He promotes one and deposes another." Great leaders realize that they are stewards. They realize that it's not their world, their church, their business; they are just the manager, the steward. Promotion comes from God, not from other people. Someone said, "You don't need to know the key men if you know the man who holds the keys." That's where promotion comes from.

2) I realize that God is holding me accountable. v. 9 "Shouldn't you walk out of the fear of our God?" The Bible says that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." One of the reasons I think people try to do things and get away with it is that they don't fear God. They think they can play games and get away with it. The Bible says, "Obey your spiritual leaders and be willing to do what they say. For their work is to watch over your souls and God will judge them on how well they do." That verse scares me to death. God is going to judge me. There is no authority without accountability. The Bible says that pastors are accountable to God, leaders are accountable to God. "We who are teachers will be judged with greater strictness than others." That's what it means to reverence God. "You put me here and You're holding me accountable of how I serve You." As a leader I am called accountable before God. There is a deep respect there for the Lord.

2. DEVELOP A LOVE FOR PEOPLE

Obviously, as we've read for five chapters, Nehemiah is a man of compassion and concern. He genuinely cared for people. We get examples of this when he got angry when the people exploited others, and he was generous with what he had. v. 17 "Furthermore 150 Jews and officials ate at my table as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations. Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me. And every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this I never demanded the food allotted to the governor for the demands were heavy on these people."

Leadership Law: Losers focus on what they can get, leaders focus on what they can give. The Bible says, "David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skill he led them." Good News says, "He shepherded them with unselfish devotion." Psalm 78:72 is one of my life verses. I pray that God will let me shepherd with integrity and with skill. I find when I study leaders, good and bad, that the leaders who consistently abuse their powers are those who don't love people. They don't reverence God and they don't love people. Paul said, "Because of our love for you [circle this] we were ready to share with you not only the Good News but even our own lives. You were so dear to us!" Notice that he says "We gave even our own lives." If you really love people you're not going to abuse and misuse them.

Nehemiah 5:6 his reaction when he learned people were being exploited "When I heard their outcry and these charges I was very angry." Love sometimes motivates you to get angry. When you see someone that you love being hurt, misused or abused, do you get upset? The very fact that he was angry here shows that he had a love for people.
3. DISCIPLINE YOURSELF FOR ETERNAL REWARDS

v. 19 "Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done to all of these people." Why was Nehemiah not caught up in the rat race like all the other leaders? Because he wasn't looking at the temporary; he was looking at the future. These leaders who were misusing their position, abusing their power and misusing their privileges exploiting people, were only looking to get rich. We see politicians today do that all the time. Two in Congress did that this week because they said they were using their position to pad their own wealth. Nehemiah said "I didn't do that. I disciplined myself."

v. 16 "Instead I devoted myself to the work on the wall. All my men were assembled there for the work we did and we did not acquire any land." Remember from last week: the people were in famine and in order to get food they were mortgaging their land to buy food. The previous governors had all the food because they were taxing all the people. They said, "We'll give you food if you give us your land." So they were amassing little mini-empires. They were using their position and privileges to feather their own nests. Nehemiah said, I came and I didn't do that. He could have made a killing in real estate because he had all the food provided. They needed food; he could have said, "Give me your land and I'll give you food." He'd get it at bargain prices and they build the wall. As soon as the wall was built the land prices would go sky high because all of a sudden it's safe to live there. He could have made a killing! But he didn't do that. Why? He revered the Lord. He loved people. He had his eyes on a future reward.

He's disciplining himself which means he limits his own freedom. If you're going to be a leader, actually rather than your having more and more privileges as you go on in leadership on the leadership pyramid, is there less space or more space at the top? There's less. More is required of leaders, there are more restrictions on leaders. The higher you go in a position of authority, the more is expected of you, the more is restricted of you, the less freedom you really have. You give it up in order for these other things.

A classic chapter on this is 1 Cor. 9. This is Paul's defense of his rights as a leader and he says, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus as Lord? ... This is my defense to those who set in judgement. Don't we have the right to food and drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us as the other apostles in the Lord and Cephus? Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?” We were paying our way, the whole way we went on our missionary journey. No one was sponsoring us. v. 9 "It's written 'Don't muzzle the ox while it's treading on grain.'" There's a principle here that the workman is worthy of his hire. Somebody works, you ought to pay him. Just as when the ox does something for you, you feed the ox. There was a Jewish law that when the ox was treading around in a circle on the grain turning the grain into meal, you were not allowed to muzzle to ox because that was inhumane. The ox was allowed to eat the very grain it was treading on. "If we have sown spiritual seed among you is it too much that we reap a material harvest from you? If others have the right of support from you, shouldn't we have all the more?" Those who are in full time ministry, have the right to be paid for full time ministry. "But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ." He was willing to limit his freedom because he was a leader.
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Leadership Law: Losers focus on their rights, leaders focus on their responsibilities. That's the difference between a looser and a leader. The looser is always saying, "I have my rights!" The leader is saying, "I have responsibilities!" Nehemiah had lots of rights. Twice in this passage he says, "I had the right to eat the food allotted to the governor." There was an allowance given to him that was due to the governor and he says he was governor for twelve years. He was the most important man in the land. He was number one. He had no direct supervisor. His supervisor was the Persian King Artaxerxes and he was 800 miles away. So for 12 years he's number one in the nation with nobody to be accountable to. Yet he did not abuse the power. He had not given in to any of these three temptations. Because he did these three things: he reverenced the Lord, he loved people, and he disciplined himself to look at eternal rewards. Notice the phrase in v. 16 "...I devoted myself..." He was single minded. He had no time for conflict of interest. He was committed to the job God gave him. He was there to build a wall, not a personal empire. His personal priorities did not involve getting rich. Evidently he had enough to live on when he'd come out of Persia and that was enough that he didn't use his position to build a financial empire.

If Nehemiah had done what the other governors had done, got involved in investments, in finances, in making money, do you think the wall would have ever gotten built as quickly? No. He said, God gave me a job to do and I'm not here to do anything else. I'm here to do what God called me to do. I'm not going to get any diversion of energy.

I've met pastors who, as a side line, are into direct sales, and they're spending most of their time doing that and then they wonder why their church doesn't grow. It's because they have a divided interest. People don't know whether he's befriending them because he wants them to be a prospect for their company or he wants them to know the Lord.

Nehemiah disciplined himself in every area. What motivated Nehemiah to live twelve years in a position of authority, accountable to nobody except God? I think the same thing that motivated Moses. In Hebrews 11 it tells us, "Moses preferred to suffer with God's people rather than to enjoy sin for a little while."

Sin is enjoyable. It's fun. If it were a bummer, nobody would do it. But it says "...sin for a little while..." You can get your kicks, all you want, but there are kick backs. He chose to suffer with God's people rather than enjoy sin for a little while. He kept his eyes on the future reward. There are few people in the history of the world that had more potential, to have the power, privilege and position that Moses did. He was number two man, in line for number one position as Pharaoh of the most successful nation of the world at that time -- Egypt. The wealth of the world was centered in Egypt. He left it all to lead a bunch of slaves across the desert. He gave up power, position and privilege -- the very thing most of us spend our lives trying to get. He gave it up. Because he had his values right. He had his values right because he had his vision right. He kept his eyes on the future reward.

If you're going to be a leader you're going to be tempted in these three areas. To use your leadership for personal gain. A leader must constantly be asking themselves "Why am I doing what I'm doing?" Heb. 6:10 "God will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." I think of all the Sunday School teachers in church. A lot of times we don't see them and all the work that they're doing but God sees it
and God isn't going to forget it. He says the love that you've shown him helped his people. Whenever you help God's people, you're showing your love to God. God is seeing that, he's recording it and there's going to be eternal rewards. That is a legitimate motive in leadership. He's saying, I don't care about the rewards here and now but I want the rewards later on. It's like the verse we looked at a couple of weeks ago, "Are you laying up treasures in heaven?" How do you do that? By service here on the earth. By giving, giving time, money, energy, everything.

We focus not on our rights. We focus on our responsibilities. 1 Peter 5:1-5 is a classic passage on words to church leaders. "To the elders... Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing ... not greedy for money but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

There are three different terms for church leaders in the New Testament and they're all found in this same passage. Circle "elder" -- this is the Greek word we get Presbyterian from; they call their leaders elders. Next word is "shepherd" -- this is translated from the Greek as shepherd or pastor. The third word is the word "overseers" -- that's the Greek word we get Episcopalian from; their church leaders are called bishops.

What's the difference between an elder, a shepherd, a pastor, and an overseer? None. The Bible uses three different Greek words to refer to the same people. Peter uses all three here talking to the leaders. He says to the elders, be shepherds, serving as overseers. In Acts 20, you see the same thing. An elder is a bishop is a pastor is a shepherd is an overseer. It doesn't matter what you call them. They all refer to three different job descriptions of a church leader.

Elder refers to spiritual maturity. It has nothing to do with physical maturity, (Timothy was the elder at the church of Ephesus and he was a very young man) it has to do with spiritual maturity. He says to the elders, be shepherds. A shepherd is a pastoral role and refers to the caring part of the job description -- the ministering, the counseling, pastoral care. Overseers refer to the management function of the church leader, administering, guiding, directing, managing.

Does our church have any elders? Sure. They are all full time. We call them pastors here. It doesn't matter what you call them -- elders, bishops, overseers, shepherds. They are all the same thing. Do we have bishops? Sure. Pastors? In our church all our elders are full time. It's a big church.

He says the first characteristic of a good church leader is they realize it's God's flock. "... be shepherds of God's flock..." This is not my church or any of our staff's church. It's God's church. We are just entrusted with leadership, with management of it. A good leader, leads out of eagerness. He leads not because he must, but because he's willing. You're concerned with what you can give not with what you can get. "...not greedy for money but eager to serve..." The leaders were paid, but you don't do it for the money. "... not lording it over those entrusted to you..." Leadership is not lordship. A real leader does not lead by being a dictator but by being an example. As a result, "... when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." Discipline yourself for eternal rewards. I want one of those crowns.
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The fact is, God does not put up with leaders who abuse their position, power and privileges. God snaps them out. Remember the story of Moses. God told him to speak to the rock and instead he struck it. He abused his power. God told him, You won't get to go into the promised land. David abused his leadership; he had an affair. God took his first born child. Saul abused his leadership, he did what God told him not to do and he lost the throne. Everyone of the Jewish kings -- when they served the Lord, they prospered. When they started abusing their position and privilege and power, they lost their leadership.

How many of you have ever been promoted? Do you identify with any of these temptations? You will be tempted to misuse your position. I had a guy leave the church because he wanted to be Chairman of the Board -- and we didn't have a board. He wanted a position, not a ministry. He wanted to be a big fish in a little pond.

You will be tempted to abuse your power. Are parents ever tempted to abuse their power? Leadership is not lordship. It's not being a dictator. It's not domineering. Jesus said, He who wants to be greatest must be the servant of all.

You will be tempted to profit from your privileges. If you get promoted, one of the things that happens is you're trusted more. Sometimes you are more flexible with your schedule. You can use that privilege and put in a full day's work or not. You can abuse an expense account. You can abuse a lot of different things that come to you in the job of leadership.

Nehemiah said, "I did not do it." Why? He deepened his reverence for the Lord. 2 Cor 5:11 Paul says, "Since then we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God and I hope it is also plain to your conscious. We're not trying to commend ourselves to you again but we're giving you the opportunity to take pride in us so you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart." Paul is saying, I'm living transparent before you. It's in plain sight -- what you see is what you get. He says, I live that way not to impress you but because I fear the Lord.

I fear what the Lord would do if I started abusing the leadership in this church. That's a godly fear and a fear that most people don't have of reverencing God and saying, God has put me here, He's put me in this position and He's holding me accountable. Therefore I can't abuse that particular situation.

Gen. 39:9 is the story of Joseph. Remember he was tempted by Potipher's wife. What kept him from giving in to that temptation? He feared what would happen to him if he displeased the Lord.

Heb. 13:7 (NIV) "Submit to their authority [that of the spiritual leaders]. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you." Circle "authority" and "account". There is no authority without accountability. Definition of a lay pastor: "A lay pastor is a person who has said "yes" to the call from God to do the work of ministry. Lay pastors assist the senior pastor in building up the body of Christ. Being accountable to the senior pastor, they are given the authority to lead a Saddleback Valley Community Church small group." Being accountable... they're given authority. There is no such thing as authority without accountability.
You deepen your reverence for God and you realize that you're accountable to Him. If you're in a position of leadership, you'll be judged in greater degree than those who are followers.

You develop the love for people as we saw in Nehemiah. Focus on what you can give not on what you can get.

Finally, discipline yourself for eternal rewards. Keep your eye on the goal.

Matthew 25:23 This is the parable of the talents. The master gave one, one talent another five talents, and another ten talents. Two of them put their talents to work and doubled it. The other guy went and hid his in the ground. The commendation that the Master says to those who discipline themselves and use their talent wisely, "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.'" That's one of the most important verses in the Bible. That's what I want to hear the Lord say when I get to heaven. More than anything else in life the one thing that motivates me is one day I want to stand before God and here Him say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." You did your best! You weren't perfect but you did your best. You were faithful. God does not call us to be successful. He calls us to be faithful. The result of being faithful in any leadership task -- everybody is a leader, just in different situations; you're all leaders -- the result is you're given greater tasks. When you get to heaven, more responsibility will be given to you. The Bible says that the way you use your opportunities for leadership here on earth are going to determine your leadership potential in the next life. You've been faithful in little things, you'll be faithful in many. Share your master's happiness. That's what God wants to do in your life and my life.

I believe that when you look at leaders and when you find leaders who are abusing their power you can be sure that, one, they don't reverence the Lord and two, they don't love people, and three, they're living for the here and now rather than for eternity.

Prayer:

Lord, would You help us all -- we're all leaders in different situations. I pray that You would help me to lead with integrity, like David, shepherd with a heart of integrity and hands of skill. Help us to all lead in the positions where we're found -- the family, school, work, small group, Sunday School class, a ministry. Help us to lead with integrity and industry, working hard. Help us to lead with priority, to know how to put first things first, to be more concerned about building Your kingdom than our own empire or own personal wealth or position or privilege. Help us to lead with generosity. As we look at Nehemiah and how he so willingly gave. He personally fed 150 people every day out of his own expenses and never took anything back for it. Help us to be generous people. Help us to lead with authenticity, to be transparent like Paul was. Most of all, help us to lead with eternity in our mind, to realize that we're going to spend more time on that side of eternity than on this side of eternity. When You put us in positions of privilege or power or prominence, that we would not fall prey to these temptations but we would be like Nehemiah, a man or woman of integrity. That's what we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.