



Nehemiah as a Biblical Model of Volunteer Workers for effective Church Administration

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Abstract

Coordination is an essential tool for an organisation's surviving and smooth running. Christian ministry needs proper administrative functions for the effectiveness of church business and human and financial resources. To achieve this noble goal, the chief administrator and a pastor need to acquaint himself or herself with the knowledge of administration. This paper attempts to provide a study of Nehemiah as the biblical model of volunteer workers for effective church administration. The name Nehemiah in the Hebrew language "*nechemyah*" or "*Nehem-Yah*" means the comfort of Jehovah or Jehovah's comforts, and the paper argues that Nehemiah's models and the pattern used by him are an archetype or perfect examples for the volunteer workers to embrace in the realisation of effective church administration. The authorial intention and motive for this study is to affirm the value and contributory efforts of the local Church's volunteer workers and the necessity for effective administration in managing human resources by the church administration. The efficiency of volunteer workers in church administration connotes the proper concept within the Church that volunteer workers and leaders exist and are needed in the Church. It is stated in this paper that in the Church, the word volunteer is considered in the light of Christian stewardship. The required significant parameters for efficient volunteer services as inferred in this study are organisation and management, recruitment, screening, and training and re-training of volunteer workers, which is the church pastor's primary task. To this end, the paper submits that volunteer workers are needed in church business, yet, the functionality of viable volunteer workers hinges on effective church administration; the pastor is supposed to be a coach-player and not the sole player in the field of Christian ministry. The paper recommends that Christian leaders should do their best to avoid distractions and make themselves available for the godly task by incorporating Nehemiah's models of leadership into their system of administration.

Keywords: Nehemiah, volunteerism, administration, efficiency, service.

Introduction

Coordination is an essential tool for any organisation's sustainability and smooth running. Christian ministry needs proper administrative functions for the effectiveness of church business, be it human and financial resources. To achieve this noble goal, the chief administrator and a pastor need to acquaint themselves with administrative knowledge. This paper attempts to provide a study of Nehemiah as the biblical model of volunteer workers towards having for effective church administration. It further seeks to draw the efforts of church administration on the volunteering ministry in contemporary times. The paper also discusses Nehemiah's mode of operation as a biblical model of volunteer worker as an incentive for today's church administrators and volunteer workers; additionally, this paper discusses the



personality of Nehemiah and the specific principles in his administrative structure in the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Historical background of Volunteerism

It is evident from the historical narrative that volunteering service is intended to help and add value to the immediate community's well-being and galvanise, promote, and improve the human quality and state of life. Historical antecedent becomes a tool for the active learning process to this end; Noble and Johnson posit that 'volunteer' was first in use and recorded in 1755, and a volunteer is one who offers himself for military service. The word derives from Middle French *voluntaire*. In the non-military sense, the word became relevant in the 1630s. The word volunteering has more recent usage; in the military context, a volunteer army is a military body whose soldiers chose to enter service, as opposed to having been conscripted and enrolled. Volunteering is, therefore, considered a humane or self-serving activity where an individual or group provides service for no financial gain. (Noble & Johnson "volunteer" available at <https://en.wikipedia.org/.../volunteerism> accessed on 15th March 2022). Volunteering is for skill development and aims to promote goodness or improve the human quality of life. Volunteering may have positive benefits for the volunteer as well as for the person or community that is served. It is also intended to help make contacts for people's employment prospects from time to time.

Many volunteer workers are majorly and primarily trained in the areas they work. Noble and Johnson affirmed that in 1851, during the American civil war, women volunteered their time to stitch, and supplied the soldiers needed materials and Clara Barton and a team of volunteers began providing aid to service members. It is ascertained that Barton founded the American Red Cross in 1881 and began mobilising the volunteer workers for disaster relief operations, including relief for victims of the Johnstown flood in 1889. "Volunteer" in Webster's New Word Dictionary (1962: 867) means; charity worker, unpaid worker, or non-professional. Volunteerism, therefore, is the act or practice of volunteer work in community service.

From the above discussions on the historical trend of volunteering, it is evident that volunteering service is intended to help and add values to the well-being of the immediate community and to galvanise, to promote, improve human quality state of life. The Volunteer is to choose or act in recognition of the pressing need with an effort and attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one's essential obligations. A volunteer worker contributes time, effort and talent to meet a need to further a mission without going to the payroll (see Ellis, available at <https://www.energizenic.com/a-z/...49> accessed on 15th March 2022). Volunteer as postulated by Tidwell (1985:128):

By Volunteer, we usually mean those whom we do not attempt to compensate financially. In Baptist life the volunteers are rarely those who come forward without some individual recruitment to offer their services as might be needed,...They are selected and recruited to serve without financial remuneration in positions like that of Sunday school leader, deacon, choir member, Church Training leader, missions organisation leader, committee member, and any of a significant member of such positions. Most are Church elected.

A volunteer worker is someone who performs his or her duties voluntarily and committedly without being paid for such service or the services rendered either to God or humanity. John A. Onwuka commented that volunteers are often those who respond to a felt need in the ministry. Nehemiah is a good example of a volunteer serving his people. There is no single record of scripture where God said: Nehemiah, leave the job you are doing, go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. However, no one would read the Book of Nehemiah without being



impressed by the fact that Nehemiah made the noblest choice by volunteering to be used by God in rebuilding the Jerusalem walls.

No sincere heart will ever doubt that God was at work in the heart of Nehemiah. The burden in his heart was a holy burden for a just cause that would glorify the name of God and fulfil His plan. In every generation, God is always looking for willing hearts that will surrender themselves for Him to use (Onwuka, 1991:56-58). A volunteer is a form of prosocial behaviour that connotes or involves a freely chosen decision to commit a sustained amount of time and effort to help another person, or group, typically a nonprofit organization. (see Arthur Stukas available at <https://www.researchable.net/publication/261562578-volunteerism> accessed on 30th April 2022). Therefore, the volunteer is one who renders selfless service or services for the benefit of an organisation, society and humanity in general.

The man Nehemiah

Nehemiah's preparedness in carrying out an assignment before him is prominent in his quick and positive response to the immediate needs. Instead of complaining he took courageous decisions and actions (Richards, 1995:15). The name Nehemiah in Hebrew language "*nechemyah*" or "*Nehem-Yah*" means the comfort of Jehovah or Jehovah comforts (Archer, 1974:418-419). Nupanga Weanzana, (2006:543) Reaffirmed Archer's position, and he vouched that the name "Nehemiah" means the Lord comforts". McCain (2000:17-19) explains that because of the sins of the Israelites in 586 BCE, God allowed Judah to be defeated by the Babylonians, Jerusalem to be destroyed and many of the Jews to be carried into captivity in Babylon which was appropriately one thousand kilometres from Palestine, this made life miserable for the Israelites dwelling and sojourning in a foreign land. Weanzana opines that the book of Nehemiah gives insight into the characteristics of an effective leader. Anderson (1962:73) presented a very relevant succinct statement on Nehemiah's work profile, and he attested that Nehemiah was indeed a man of vision, and better still a man of action. Nehemiah shared Ezra's faith and trust in God, he knew about the hard and deplorable realities of the situation in Jerusalem, yet his faith helped him to see a vision of new Jerusalem as she might be with God's help, it is a special thing to have dreams and visions and ideas.

Nehemiah as a Biblical model

The thrust of this paper is on Nehemiah as a Biblical Model of a volunteer worker for effective church Administration. Nehemiah's models and patterns as an archetype or perfect example for volunteer workers to embrace, in the realisation of effective church administration. According to Ojo, he painstakingly identifies specific models that are of value to this paper. They are coordination, cooperation, communication, and commendation (Ojo, 2011:175-180). Having established the fact that Nehemiah serves as a volunteer, this section of the paper turns discussing the mode and approach of his operation administratively towards the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in a record of fifty-two days (Nehemiah 6:15). Ojo re-affirming Hughes' position asserted that coordination is one of the first principles of active leadership, it is also a necessity for a ministry fulfilment and effective administration and organisation.

The sharing out of work (Nehemiah 3) reveals an extraordinary volunteer team spirit (Maxwell, 2001:4) and it affirms that one cannot do anything of real value alone. The success of volunteer workers depends on each member's ability (Blacklock. 2007: 63). It indicates that volunteer worker thrives better on the ability of other workers. Nehemiah's model of job description and proper coordination enable volunteer workers to give out their best to their assigned tasks.

Cooperation is the responsibility of leadership to bring people together: physical presence, collective will and spirit (Bruce, 1979: 62). Ojo re-echoes that unity of the team is an essential ingredient of cooperation. The goal of a team is to achieve set goals of the team.



Communication is another critical principle Nehemiah engaged by way of his actions. "Good communication is a necessity if teamwork is going to succeed. There is a need for exchange of thoughts and opinions". Lack of proper communication will always tend to jeopardise the volunteer workers goals, the leader or administrator must possess excellent communication skills because it involves giving instructions and ability to turn ideas into action based- activity on the given information. The last principles and pattern discussed by Ojo is commendation. He agreed that "Nehemiah shows a high sense of responsibility in painstakingly showing personal interest in almost all of the entire workforce. He knew people he worked with by name and highly valued each individual's efforts. Nehemiah was careful to give honour to whom it was due," Nehemiah commends the following people, the men of Tekoa, the contribution of Malkijah, son of Recab who single-handedly repaired the Dung Gate (Nehemiah 3:14). It is important to appreciate work that is well done.

Anderson has this addendum to Nehemiah's model. Nehemiah was a man of perseverance. Throughout the construction of the city walls, despite the attacks of the enemies, and re-occurring complaints of his fellow workers, he never wavered or faltered and weakened (Nehemiah 6:3, 4:15; Anderson, 1962:74-75). This statement should serve as an encouraging factor for the volunteer workers and administrator to always get ready for the work they need to do at their respectful duty post. It is on record that Nehemiah also achieved his goal through practical administrative skills yet it is a necessity for the writer of this paper to evaluate in brief the noted impediments as a holistic picture for volunteers whenever they may tend to come across hitches as they perform their important volunteer roles.

The necessity of volunteer workers in local Baptist Churches

The efficiency of volunteer workers in church administration connotes a proper concept within the Church. Adetunji asserted that any Church is an association of volunteers (Adetunji, 2010:256). He further added that volunteer workers and leaders exist and are sorely needed in the Church and he corroborated that scholars' view it as a necessity that volunteers are used in fulfilling the set goals. Caldwell says: In the Church, the word volunteer is considered in the light of Christian stewardship. It is also means optional or conditional, and voluntary service and this seems to indicate that one can do it if he wants to in reality, and Christian service is not optional. A believer must be committed to using his spiritual gifts to serve Christ and others (Caldwell, 1993: 6-7). Consequently, this implies that the Church must share the conviction that volunteers are vital to the ministry of the Church and that if church leaders that are the pastor (administrators) are not committed to this philosophy, then the work of enlisting and developing useful volunteers will be a significant problem to overcome. Caldwell opines that the time, talent and treasure contribute by volunteers will enhance and enlarge all that a church does to minister in Christ's name. Volunteers are viable persons who enhance the speedy growth of church ministry when they are dedicated to the tasks assigned to them.

According to Oyeniyi (2016:193) the Church has been an organisation and organism that is led by volunteers. Volunteer ministry is the heart of the Church and it is a needed service because it enables every believer to have the unique opportunity to give out God's endowments for the betterment of church ministry or ministries. The researcher infers that the necessity of volunteer workers or volunteering ministry is crucial to the church's administrative efficiency. Wade, Bowman and Bowman (2002:64-72) acknowledge that the Church is the people of God, the temple of God, an army of God, bride of Christ are of God and body of Christ. In as much the Church is acknowledged as the people of God, the necessity of volunteers workers can never be an over-emphasised aspect considering God's divine endowments on individuals within the scope of the Church. The church is after all His nation (*laos*) and the 'people of God' are the fullness (*pleroma*) of the church, or the congregation of God's people (Nicolaides, 2010; 2021).



Parameters for Nehemiah's achievements as a volunteer worker

Specific observable tools which enhanced Nehemiah's mission of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and by extension, serve as parameters for the volunteer workers in this dispensation is the focus of this section. McCain asserted that "leadership usually involves two major issues, organisation and management. Before a project can start, someone has to come up with the idea and think through all of the issues related to starting it (McCain, 2000:19). McCain explains that Nehemiah was good at both organising and managing, and he serves as a good role model for the volunteer workers in the local Church.

Nehemiah possessed certain qualities that attracted him to the people; he was a man of integrity, and one of the most significant needs in the Christian and volunteer ministry today is to have leaders and volunteer workers who are men and women of integrity; therefore, in selecting the volunteer workers the leaders should make sure that they are recruiting people of honourable dispensation who will fear God more than man and also be seen as trustworthy people (McCain, 2000, 84-85). A valuable asset of the Church will be committed into the hands of volunteer workers, the required absolute of honesty in all their dealings. In addition, they must be willing to work, obey God's commands and offer unpaid helping activities. In the context of this paper, members should engage themselves in such services because they have a divine leading and a real burden to do so, just as it was in Nehemiah's efforts in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Recruitment, screening and training of volunteers

Using Nehemiah's models as examples for today's church administrators and pastors, the following itemised points of emphasis would be of help in discharging church functions administratively. The pastor (Administrator) is responsible to recruit, train, organise, and direct both voluntary and paid church workers and in most cases may also need many non-paid workers for the scores of ministries that must be covered. Recruiting volunteer workers, in these exceedingly busy days, it is not an easy task to recruit volunteer workers for the many tasks required in a Church. One of the chief complaints of industry and business today is their inability to recruit employees who are energetic, committed, loyal, faithful, enthusiastic and intelligent. Unfortunately, the same shortage of dedicated workers exists in many churches globally (James, 2004:443-444).

There are several ways a pastor can recruit volunteer workers for the various ministries of the local Church. To this end, James proposed that the pastor or administrator could learn from these principles. First, he should give personal attention to the individual believer. A good administrator of the Church will study the individual members in his congregation. He will continuously be on the lookout for those who have talent, those who can be trained and used in God's work, and those whose dedication is such that 'they are willing to be involved in the work of the Church. He will personally solicit them for service in the Lord's army. Second, the pastor or administrator should emphasise the spiritual privileges, opportunities and responsibilities as he enlists workers. His people should be made to realise that whatever service performed and rendered, each one is doing it as unto the Lord, and therefore the ministry should be committedly carried out. Third, the pastor or administrator can survey the membership periodically. He could provide a card or form for the people to fill out, indicating the kind of service they would like to render to the Lord through their Church. New members should also be asked to indicate the service they prefer to render. This type of survey should be done annually.

Church administration and volunteerism

Volunteer workers are needed in church business, yet, the functionality of viable volunteer workers hinges on effective church administration. John C. Maxwell submitted that "A great



dream with a bad team is nothing more than a nightmare" (Maxwell, 2001:48). Volunteer workers remain a valid premise on which the Church thrives yet there is need for effective administration before the efforts of volunteer workers would yield the expected result Adeyemo, (2017:16) re-emphasised Beal and others who stated that "No group can produce any worthwhile action in the direction of its goals without leadership." Oke asserted that the right to leadership from a biblical point of view stems from the concept of one who is called. All Christians are called. All are called (to serve) together. All are called for the totality of everyday life." (Oke, 2008:99). This informs the volunteer workers that there is no room for individualism and that every Christian becomes a biblical volunteer worker though it is grounded on a personal and willful act to serve in any available capacity.

Effective church administration connotes good leadership. Leadership is a process of guiding and directing a group of people to achieve the desired purpose (Adetunji, 2019:85). Leadership is getting others to follow you and to willingly do the things that you want them to do. The thrust of church administration is to provide good leadership that will enable members to discover their usefulness in Christian leadership and ministry through proper coordination. According to Blackwell (1980), effective coordination stems from effective planning, and the church administrator must do all possible to plan adequately for the Church by setting up a goals oriented programme and be willing to change goals because a goal that is reached and achieved is no longer a goal, and goals can and often do change (Blackwell, 1980). Effective planning serves as a wheel that propels good leadership and administration; without proper planning, the set goals would not be achievable in record time.

Rogers (2001) commented that a word to describe leadership is "influence" he agreed that it involves "influence in human sufficiency, human potential and limited resources. According to the world's viewpoint, leadership comes from "One's position of authority. One's ability to do something for somebody, one's degree of honour or respect, any combination of the above." Due to the above assertions, leadership has an influence on people, and such influence emanates from a position of responsibility (and authority) and it has the capacity and potentials either to do something towards some end, or for somebody, leadership is all about influencing others positively. Adetunji affirms that administration is doing things right if there is a prescribed structure, then one has it right. If there are stated policies and procedures one must keep them (Adetunji, 2010:20).

The need for effective Church administration

Ishola postulated that excellent and effective administration of the Church is a significant responsibility of the pastor. He affirmed that a pastor is supposed to be a coach-player and not the sole player in the field of Christian ministry (Ishola, 2019:132). The question is that if good and effective administration of the Church is the sole responsibility of the pastor, why do some church leaders ignore it? The answer to the question as to why church leaders do snub the responsibility of administration is evident in House (1969) statement when he affirmed that "church leaders ignore good administration because they do not understand that as leaders they are primarily administrator." Church leaders often know their list of "duties and responsibilities, but they have not specified the concept that they are to administer the work entrusted to them" (House, 1969: 8-9). It is worthy and of note to assert that possessing and acquiring administrative skills, knowledge by church leaders is a needed impetus and motivation in thriving and building the effectiveness of church administration as speculated by Ishola, the development of knowledge and skill acquisition will put an end to the trend of ignoring the concept of proper administration because the church leader or pastor is an administrator, indeed a pastor is the chief administrative officer of the Church.

The definitions of church administration as opined by Ishola (2019) reveals the core responsibilities of an administrator. Ishola affirmed that "church administration may be well-defined as a field in terms of certain formational areas in which leaders perform certain



leadership functions. The extents to which one performs these leadership functions in the field of church administration is the extent one may be termed a church administrator." He added that "church administration is the leadership which equips the Church to be the Church and to do the work of the Church. Church administration is an avenue for the pastor to lead the Church in fulfilling the functions of the Church" (Ishola, 2019:133-134). The functions of the Church involve worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and ministry (Ishola, 2019:134).

Administrative functions of the administrator

Scholars affirm that a pastor is invariably also an administrator because he performs leadership functions in the field of church administration. To this end, this paper turns to discuss specific information that will speed-up the administrator's positive action. The pastors should be more informed as they administer their churches. According to Ishola, the following information is very significant. The pastor is not just a paid staff member of the Church; he is also a member of the Church. He serves as the chairman and moderator of the church council and the church-in-conference- meaning that, he coordinates the affairs of the Church including the activities of the education of believers and also serves missionary organisations.

The pastor is to relate cordially with all church members; he supervises the paid staff and the volunteer leaders of the Church. The pastor is to coordinate the use of human, physical and financial resources to the glory of God and promote the swift growth of the Church, he has the responsibility to guide the Church in drawing the calendar of activities for the year, and he also coordinates the preparation of annual church budget" (Ishola, 2019: 135-136). A functional goal setting is very fundamental to the successful performance of a pastor in his pastoral service as it gives a right direction to the expected administrative obligations (Oyesoji, 2010:51). The chief administrator must understand that he has the task of setting achievable goals because this keeps one focused on reaching and achieving the set goals (Manz & Henry, 1991:123). Effective church administration signifies good relationship; the pastor should develop his or her relational skills. Ishola observed that "Man is created for relationship. As servants leaders pastors should know that they are most effective when they trust others to work with them" (Ishola, 2012:259-261). Effective church administration is an achievable phenomenon through the chief administrator's leadership skills as it reflects through a pastor's relational ability with the volunteer workers, though a chief administrator, he must also acknowledge his or her membership in the Church. He is also expected to coordinate, communicate, cooperate and commend the volunteer workers as he administers his role as an administrator for the efficiency of his teamwork. Leaders are channels of good relationship and most especially in a Christian ministry.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the meaning of the term 'volunteer' and the necessity of volunteer workers in our contemporary time as Christian workers in Churches. An attempt has been made to discuss Nehemiah's principles for his excellent performance as an administrator and as an epitome of a commendable Biblical volunteer. The paper also discovered that Nehemiah was a man of vision, a faithful man and a man of courage. Nehemiah exemplified good leadership and had a highly effective administrative structure through proper coordination and supervision. Therefore, today's leaders are also encouraged to embrace Nehemiah's views and response to the need of society. The re-building of Jerusalem's walls was tough and though he encountered opposition Nehemiah was never discouraged, and he kept on doing his assignment. Nehemiah's attitudes, lifestyle, strategies and priorities worked in tandem to alter society for the betterment of people. Nehemiah was committed to the tasks at hand, and also had courage, and a strong desire to do things well. He also paid close attention to his followers' needs and desires and was a fighter in striving to accomplish his many goals. He also saw himself as God's servant and was intent to serve the Jews by working tirelessly to meet some of their needs. Following this example, all Christian leaders should do



their best to avoid distractions and make themselves available for godly tasks. One should be involved as a leader in the things of God's kingdom earthly operations, and learn from Nehemiah's example, and strive to be a person of vision and courage.

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