“Things sure didn’t go very well last Sunday,” Saven remarked “We need to pray for our Sunday school.”

“That’s right,” agreed Bella She was leading the monthly meeting of the Sunday school committee. After a time of prayer, she continued the discussion.

“You say you didn’t feel good about last Sunday. What is the problem?”

“The adult classes are too close to those noisy boys,” said Leif “Is there any way we could move the classes around?”

“Moving the classes is no answer,” Marta declared. “It’s a matter of discipline. We should make those boys be quiet.”

“The problem is the parents,” Leif proposed. “Maybe we should put out a notice asking the parents to cooperate.”

“I hate to say this,” Saven spoke slowly, “but maybe it’s the teacher. He just doesn’t hold their attention, and that’s why they’re so noisy. Could we find someone else to teach that class?”

“Or we could give him a helper,” Marta suggested. “Two working together might be effective.”

Bella spoke very little, but she was performing one of the most important tasks of leadership. She was guiding her people to analyze problems and seek solutions for them. In this lesson we will examine the methods of the great leader, Nehemiah. We will learn from him and from modern scholars how to solve problems and make decisions.
Lesson Outline

A. Nehemiah—A Wise and Decisive Leader
B. Leadership Involves Problem-Solving
C. Leadership Involves Decision-Making
D. Group Dynamics

Lesson Objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Distinguish leadership characteristics and leadership functions in the account of Nehemiah.
2. Identify and explain stages and steps of the problem-solving process.
3. List and evaluate aspects of decision-making, including steps, obstacles, and styles.
4. Explain how to approach group work according to the social and task dimensions.
5. Recognize and evaluate decision-making styles.

Learning Activities

1. It will be beneficial, and we believe interesting, for you to review the entire book of Nehemiah. Of special importance for this lesson are chapters 1–5; 6:15–7:3; 8.
2. Work through the lesson development and answer the study questions in the usual manner. When you have finished, take the self-test and check your answers.
3. After you take the self-test, review Lessons 4–6 (Unit Two). Then complete the Unit Two Evaluation and check your answers with the key in the back of this book.
**Key Words**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>downtrodden</th>
<th>ridicule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidant</td>
<td>faction</td>
<td>routine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>harmonize</td>
<td>symptom</td>
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<td>Dimensions</td>
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A. NEHEMIAH—A WISE AND DECISIVE LEADER

Objective 1. *Distinguish leadership characteristics and leadership functions in the account of Nehemiah.*

During the period after Cyrus had decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah was cupbearer in the Persian court. His position and popularity had resulted in good personal fortune for him. He had wealth and privileges. Nevertheless, his heart was with his own people and he was concerned for his beloved homeland. When he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins, he wept and prayed. He felt that God was calling him to a great task (see Nehemiah chaps. 1 and 2).

“Why do you look so sad?” the king asked.

“Because our city is a wasteland, with the gates burned. It is a sorrow and a disgrace.”

“What would you like to do about it?” the king inquired.

At this point begins one of the most complete illustrations of leadership that has ever been written. Nehemiah was motivated by a love for Jerusalem, the city of his God and his people. The value he placed upon Jerusalem was far greater than any personal gain or ease he had as a popular confidant of the king. Nehemiah had vision. He was able to comprehend the total situation and recognize the need for action. He could see a clear goal and a possible means of reaching it. He did not hesitate to tell the king exactly what he had in mind. With suitable respect, but with boldness, he spoke: “I want you to send me to Judah, to rebuild the city of my fathers.”

We see that the Lord guided Nehemiah to go through the proper channels and present plans in a reasonable way. “How long will it take?” the king asked, and Nehemiah tells us, “I set a time.” He was in no way vague nor hesitant. “I need letters of safe-conduct, too,” he continued, “and permission to use timber from the king’s forests.”
Next, we find that Nehemiah carefully studied the situation in detail. Riding around the walls, he inspected the damage and no doubt planned in his mind how the work should proceed. When he felt he was in possession of all essential information and was sure of God’s leading, he called together all the priests, nobles, officials, and other workers to place the matter before them (chap. 2).

He communicated to them, clearly and honestly, the plan he had in mind and the goal to be attained. He led them to face reality, giving them an accurate description of the situation. He motivated them by letting them see that his goal was also theirs, saying, “Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.” He gave assignments, which included repair of the walls near their own houses. He kept records so that it could be reported what had been done by each group of workers (chap. 3).

Nehemiah, like most leaders, had problems both from within his own people and from the outside. Enemies tried to stop the project by fighting and to discourage the workers with ridicule and insults. Nehemiah organized his people for work and for self-protection. Most importantly, he worked among them personally and gave them words of encouragement. “Don’t be afraid,” he counseled them. “Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome” (4:14).

While they were working day and night with all their strength and living under the threat of imminent attack, it made Nehemiah sad to realize that some of his people were taking advantage of others. Some had managed to keep much property during the days of captivity, and others were destitute, without enough to eat. Nehemiah saw that the poor were being cheated. He did not make excuses for the wealthy and powerful in order to maintain his own high status. He said plainly, “What you are doing is not right. Stop cheating the poor.” As a godly leader, he knew that no goal can have meaning unless those who work toward it are doing God’s will and are living in peace with one another. The people are important, as well as the task and goal.
Nehemiah’s official position was that of governor of Judah, yet he refused to accept any of the special privileges that might have been his. Instead of having special meals for himself, he prepared large meals for those who were in need. He had enough money for his personal needs, so he took no salary for his services to his people. He devoted himself completely to the work and did not acquire any land or money for himself (5:14–18).

There was no doubt of the success of Nehemiah’s leadership, for the main objective was reached—the wall of Jerusalem was completed—in 52 days.

**Application**

1. Each sentence below illustrates a leadership characteristic or a leadership function. Place before each a number to indicate which of the following is most appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership characteristics</th>
<th>Leadership functions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Empathy</td>
<td>4) Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Competence</td>
<td>5) Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) A sense of calling</td>
<td>6) Motivating others</td>
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</table>

. . . a) Nehemiah said, “Come, let us build the wall so we will not be a disgrace.”

. . . b) He examined the wall carefully and provided the correct materials.

. . . c) He told them the hand of God was upon him.

. . . d) Although he was rich, he supported the position of the poor.

. . . e) He thought about what he would say to the king.

. . . f) He assigned each group to a definite part of the work.
B. Leadership Involves Problem-Solving

Objective 2. Identify and explain stages and steps of the problem-solving process.

Our brief review of the experiences of Nehemiah has shown us that he had the characteristics and carried out the functions of leadership. A closer examination of this material will reveal to us what is perhaps the greatest strength of Nehemiah’s leadership: With confidence in God, he accepted the responsibility of solving problems and making decisions.

Students of leadership functions have devised several models of the problem-solving process. They usually suggest three main stages. Each stage has several steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGES IN PROBLEM-SOLVING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Stage</strong>: Defining or formulating the problem and deciding to act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Analyze and describe the situation (or general condition).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. State the problem in specific terms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Decide if action is needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Second Stage</strong>: Selecting a solution and taking action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Consider alternative solutions (and advantages and disadvantages of each).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Select a course of action and outline specific procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Implement action and monitor each procedure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Stage</strong>: Evaluating the outcome of the action. If the outcome is satisfactory, the problem is solved. If not, it is necessary to ask these questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Was the problem defined correctly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Was the correct solution chosen?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Was the action carried out properly?</td>
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</table>
These three stages of problem-solving are evident in Nehemiah’s experiences. What we call a “problem” is something we identify from a situation that makes us feel uneasy or distressed in some way. We feel that “something is wrong.” We feel tension or frustration. Nehemiah said he was “sad” about the condition of which he was aware. The condition was that the survivors of Judah were in great trouble and disgrace. Next, note that Nehemiah questioned the messengers. He was analyzing the situation before deciding to ask help from the king. Later, he examined the walls in person, so that he could describe the situation in detail. This illustrates the first step in problem-solving: Know exactly what the situation is. Ask, “What kind of trouble or unrest is involved?”

Out of the general condition of unrest, we must identify a definite problem that can be attacked. In this case, the general state was the trouble and disgrace of the people. The specific problem was that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and burned. Nehemiah understood the connection between the condition and the problem. The trouble and disgrace were the result of broken walls. He stated this clearly. This is the second step. You must know what the specific problem is and be able to state it clearly.

Nehemiah decided that action should be taken. Then, he proceeded through the second stage of problem-solving, working out the steps of the action and seeing that they were made effectively. Not only in the case of the first major problem, but several times, as other problems arose, we find that Nehemiah used strategies such as we have described.
Application

2–3 In the following examples, a general condition or situation will be given. You are to select the specific problem and the appropriate solution from among those listed. Circle the letter that indicates your choice in each case.

2 In Nehemiah 4, the general condition was that the Jews were being insulted and attacked.

The specific problem was
\( a) \) the Samaritans and the Ammonites were plotting together.
\( b) \) work on the wall was being hindered.
\( c) \) the Jews were complaining too much.

Nehemiah’s solution was to
\( d) \) attack the enemy armies.
\( e) \) equip the builders with defensive weapons.
\( f) \) preach to the complaining Jews.

3 In Nehemiah 5, the general condition was that people were complaining and bringing accusations against their Jewish brothers.

The specific problem was
\( a) \) the poor had to borrow money.
\( b) \) sons and daughters were sold into slavery.
\( c) \) unlawful usury was being charged.

Nehemiah’s solution was to
\( d) \) require that the Law of God be observed.
\( e) \) ask people to be more loving to each other.
\( f) \) start a welfare system to help the poor.

We can see from these examples that it is necessary to separate the specific problem from the general condition in order to look for solutions. Let’s turn back to our illustration of the teachers’ meeting and see how this may work in a church in our own time. In this situation, the problem is to be solved, not by one person, but by the group. In most of our present leadership
situations it happens in a similar manner. Let’s see how a group works through the stages of problem-solving.

**The First Stage**

According to Saven, what is the general condition in our brief story? “Things didn’t go very well last Sunday.” Many of the problems you will face as a Christian leader will be introduced to you much like that. Someone feels dissatisfied. There is tension and unrest. Your first responsibility in problem-solving is to be sensitive and aware of these first indications of trouble. Then, you must allow the situation to progress so that the real problem comes out in a way that will lead to its solution. It is easy to make mistakes at this point.

Suppose Bella had said, “Yes, it was pretty bad. Nobody did a very good job. Everybody’s been letting each other down lately. We have to be willing to work harder for the Lord.”

This would have cut off consideration of the real problem. Feelings might have been hurt. The others would have been afraid to express their concerns because it might make them seem unwilling to do God’s work just because of some small problem.

On the other hand, suppose Bella had said, “Oh, everything was pretty good. We have to look on the bright side. We Christians shouldn’t get discouraged.”

Probably that, too, would have kept the others from continuing with the real issue. They would have felt ashamed to complain.

What Bella did in this case what a good leader should do. She did not show approval nor disapproval. She allowed group members to express their feelings and ideas. Let’s notice how they proceeded.

From a vague feeling of tension and dissatisfaction, someone identified a specific factor: noise. Noise was causing the feelings. There is a tendency for people to do as Leif did and try to define the problem without analyzing it. He said, “The adult classes
are too close to the boys.” But that was not the problem, was it? What was the problem? Was it noise? No, noise was a *symptom* of the problem, not the problem itself. Many times people confuse symptoms with problems, and the leader must guide them to analyze all the events and factors more carefully. In this case, the group began to look for the cause of the noise. Was it inadequate discipline? Was it careless parents? Was it inadequate teaching? The group was trying to define the problem.

**TYPICAL SEQUENCE FOR DEFINING A PROBLEM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL CONDITION</th>
<th>SYMPTOMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of frustration, tension, unrest</td>
<td>Identification of events and factors associated with the feelings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
<th>SPECIFIC PROBLEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examination of the symptoms—factors and events</td>
<td>Identification of the event or factor which controls the situation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Application**

4 In the illustration of the teachers’ meeting:

a) The general condition was

b) The symptom, or factor associated with the feeling, was

c) Analysis of the situation brought out possible causes for the noise, such as

When the group members have completed this analysis, they should be able to agree upon a statement of the problem. How would you state or define the problem if you were Bella? It could
be something like this: *Classroom activities are not holding the boys’ attention.*

It is now obvious that no solution could be found until the problem was defined. This is always the first stage in problem-solving.

**The Second Stage**

The group members have defined a problem and decided that some kind of action needs to be taken. In our illustration, they did this informally. As you understand these processes more thoroughly, you will be able to guide a group through the steps with or without a formal structure.

The members begin to propose solutions such as sending notes to the parents, changing teachers, and getting a helper for the teacher. What other ideas could you suggest? Perhaps more suitable chairs, better teaching materials, or a teachers’ training class for all the teachers.

These proposals are called *alternative solutions*. When one of them is selected, the group must discuss steps that can be taken and possible consequence of the action. Who will be involved? Will there be any expense? What exact outcome is expected? How and when will the outcome be evaluated? This step requires careful leadership. The members of the group must not be allowed to leave thinking the problem is solved. They must be aware of specific action steps and how they are to be carried out. The leader must then implement the action and continually monitor it, as Nehemiah did, working among his people along the wall.

**The Third Stage**

After a specific period of time, the members should be given an opportunity to express their feelings concerning the outcome of the solution. In some cases a formal progress report may be required. In a case such as that of the noisy classroom this may be an informal discussion. Is the plan working? Is the general condition more pleasant? Should some other actions be taken?
If the outcome is mostly positive, the leader should express appreciation. If it tends to be negative, the leader should offer understanding and encourage further efforts.

**Application**

5 Write from memory the three stages in problem-solving and the steps included in each stage.

**C. LEADERSHIP INVOLVES DECISION-MAKING**

**Objective 3.** List and evaluate aspects of decision-making, including steps, obstacles, and styles.

Decision-making is related closely to problem-solving. The mental processes and procedural steps are very similar. The main difference is that decisions are required in many routine situations just to keep the work moving ahead. In each case, there is a condition of need—something needs to be done or a particular course of action must be selected from alternative possibilities.

There are times when leaders must decide personally what action to take (or not to take). At other times, they participate in decision-making with their superiors. They often lead a group in decision-making activities. You need to learn how to be effective in each of these situations.

**Nehemiah Made Decisions**

Think back over the book of Nehemiah. How many decisions did Nehemiah have to make? For example, when he heard of Jerusalem’s condition, he had to decide to commit himself. He decided to ask for a leave of absence from the court. This could have brought him trouble or even death, for the will of kings was absolute in those days. He decided to ask the king not only for time off but also for materials and letters of safe conduct. Then, he examined the wall and decided to put the matter before a committee. He took the risk of sharing his burden with others. He asked them to make a decision, too. Later, he made
decisions concerning how to deal with the enemies. Should he fight them or just defend the work on the wall? He decided to risk his position by rebuking the wealthy Jews for charging usury and cheating the poor. He required them to decide to give back what they had taken and stop charging usury. In every case, Nehemiah acquired the necessary information, so the issue or problem was clear to him. Then, he had the courage and wisdom to make a definite decision. In this way, he provides an example for all good Christian leadership: Have adequate information. Understand the risks and be willing to take the consequences. Make the situation clear to those who work with you. Make definite decisions, and give others opportunities to express definite decisions.

Steps in Decision-Making

1. *Be confident in the Lord.* Faith has a place in decision-making. Throughout the book of Nehemiah we are made well aware that Nehemiah’s trust was not in himself but in God, but he did not call upon the Lord to build the walls by divine intervention. God could have done it as easily as He pulled down the walls at Jericho; however, He chose to work through the mind and will of Nehemiah and those Nehemiah would lead. In most cases, God works through means that men call “natural.” Some person such as Nehemiah must make decisions that place all natural means at the disposal of God’s divine plan.

2. *Collect information.* Identify and describe the situation. Good decisions are based upon facts and knowledge. Be sure that what you have been told by others is correct. Examine the details for yourself or see that a competent helper examines them and reports to you. Try never to jump to conclusions or be pushed by emotional people into making decisions too quickly.

3. *List alternative courses of action.* In some cases, you may decide to take no action or to delay action to see if the situation changes. There is usually more than one possible solution. Most good leaders never say, “I have no choice.”
4. *Think of advantages and disadvantages.* List possible risks, consequences, and obstacles. Consider the expense and effort required for various alternatives. Be willing to make some adjustments. For example, if a worker is very skilled at a task but constantly arrives late, you may have to decide to allow for the lateness in order to take advantage of the skill.

5. *Think of the people involved in your decisions.* How will your decisions affect others? Who else should be advised before you take action? Whose opinions and ideas should be considered?

6. *Seek help and suggestions from qualified people.* Never be afraid to “lose face” or to admit you need help. It is strength, not weakness, to share decision-making with others.

7. *Test your decisions.* Look back, not in regret or indecision, but in honest appraisal of your action. Learn from your mistakes.

**Obstacles to Decision-Making**

1. *Failure to form clear objectives.* If we are not sure what end we are working for, then we find it difficult to decide what action to take. For example, a leader is told that a well-known evangelist is visiting the area. It is suggested that he be invited to speak, sing, and play his guitar at the teachers’ meeting. The leader had planned a discussion concerning biblical doctrine. How will he decide what to do? If he sets the objective of the meeting to have the teachers leave feeling happy and inspired, then he will choose the evangelist. If he sets the objective to have the teachers leave the meeting with a better understanding of a doctrinal issue, he will decide to have the discussion. This is not to say that one decision is “better” than another. It is to say that the decision is based upon the desired outcome, or the objective, that the leader has in mind. When you find yourself in the position of not knowing how to decide an issue, ask yourself honestly, “What is the objective?”
2. *Feelings of insecurity.* A leader may be afraid to act. This may be a result of his own personality, or it may be because he does not have a clear understanding of his position and his relationship with other leaders. As we have seen, most leaders in Christian work are middle leaders. A youth leader and a Sunday school superintendent, for example, must be sure they understand their responsibilities and their relationship with the pastor. They must be sure that their decisions will be supported. If they feel insecure, they may refuse to make decisions, and they may be too embarrassed to ask for the help they need from the pastor.

3. *Fear of change.* It is always more comfortable to keep doing things in the customary way. Almost everyone resists change to some extent. A leader may hesitate to make a decision because he or she fears the people’s response to change. A good leader accepts the need for change and tries to move in a way that will prepare his or her followers to accept needed changes.

4. *Failure to face facts honestly.* There is a tendency in Christian work to fear making evaluations because this may seem to be a lack of faith. Leaders make decisions with inadequate information because they are afraid to ask questions and find out how people really feel. Unless you are willing to evaluate a situation and understand the real needs of people, you cannot make good decisions.

**Styles of Decision-Making**

In most situations, Christian leaders guide a group in decision-making. The degree to which the group is involved changes according to the circumstances. For example, if the group members have very little experience, the leader may have greater responsibility for making the decisions. If the members are competent, experienced Christians, they should be encouraged to take more responsibility. Decision-making styles range from extremely authoritarian, in which the leader makes all the decisions, to the extremely democratic, in which the group
members act with relative independence. These styles may be described as follows:

1. The leader makes the decision and announces it to the group.

2. The leader makes the decision and then “sells” it to the group. That is, he or she urges the group to accept his or her decision, giving the members no real choice.

3. The leader presents a decision and invites the group to ask questions. Discussion may be encouraged, but the decision is not really changed by the group.

4. The leader presents a tentative decision and invites the group to discuss it. He or she may then make some changes on the basis of suggestions from the group.

5. The leader presents a problem that he or she has defined and asks the group to suggest alternative solutions. Then, he or she makes the decision.

6. The leader describes a situation and sets some limits or guidelines and then asks the group to make the decision.

7. The leader allows the group to analyze a situation, define a problem, and make the decision, according to the process we have discussed. In this style, the leader guides the group to act within limits of higher authorities, such as church policies, and he or she provides information. This is true group decision-making. We will discuss it further in the section on group dynamics.

**Application**

6. We learn from the example of Nehemiah that
   a) good Christians do not have to go through the decision-making process.
   b) faith in the Lord is required when natural means fail.
   c) decisions must be made by natural means only.
   d) the Lord guides people in the decision-making process.
The most effective style of decision-making depends upon the specific situation. It is neither authoritarian nor extremely democratic. Usually it is authoritarian if the leader is strong. It is the democratic style because more people are involved.

Circle the letter in front of each true statement.

a) The most competent leaders make their decisions very quickly.
b) There is only one truly effective way to solve most problems.
c) It is not a lack of faith to consider the risks and the expense involved before making a decision.

Questions for meditation and self-analysis: Look back at the Styles of Decision-Making and try to think of a situation where each one might be appropriate. Is there one style which you feel is best for you most of the time? Why?

D. GROUP DYNAMICS

Group Dynamics Explained

Objective 4. Explain how to approach group work according to the social and task dimensions.

Since most decisions involve groups in one way or another, it is necessary for the leader to understand the concepts group and group dynamics. The first basic truth is that human beings are essentially social—that is, they need each other and work best when they work together. The second basic truth is that a true group is not just any collection of people. It is a collection of people who act together and influence one another. A group decision is not just one person’s decision that is accepted by everyone else. It is a decision to which the group members have given thought and personal interest.

One of the amazing truths about groups is that, regardless of how different people are, as individuals they can form some kind of common ground in order to work together toward some end that they think is worthwhile. This should be especially true of
Christian groups, since the common ground of faith and belief is the basis of Christian fellowship. *Group dynamics* is a term used to describe the special kind of power and action that comes from people working together. An illustration of this is a family or a clan in which the members feel that they are a part of one another. They act as a unit. The strength and satisfaction felt in contributing to the decisions and activities of the group are different from any which come from working alone.

The advantage of working in groups is not only in the satisfaction experienced by the members but also in the quality of work that can be accomplished. Obviously, some members of a group will have more knowledge and skill than others, but a good leader will see that everyone has an opportunity to contribute. Special status should not be given to individuals, but rather there should be a recognition of different types of contributions. For example, a person with little skill might have a gift of faith or a happy spirit that encourages the other members when problems arise. There is an old saying that a hundred ditchdiggers could build a bridge. It might be crude, but it would serve its purpose. In contrast, a very accomplished architect working alone would have much more difficulty building a bridge. A bridge he tries to build alone would probably be even more crude than one built by unskilled laborers. On the other hand, the architect and the laborers working together could build a very fine bridge.

**Dimensions of the Group**

When we speak of *group dynamics*, we have two ideas in mind—the people and the task. These are sometimes called the *dimensions* of the group. One is the *social dimension*—how the members of the group relate to one another, how they feel about one another, and how they feel about their own place and contributions in the group. The other is the *task dimension*—how the members contribute in various ways to the accomplishing of the work. It is the leader’s responsibility to guide in the development of the two dimensions. Following are some suggestions for group leadership.
**The Social Dimension**

1. *Encourage the members.* Help them to be warm and responsive to one another. Give recognition to all members.


4. *Keep the communication channels open.* Try to make everyone feel free to express ideas and opinions.

5. *Set standards.* Make some rules, if necessary. For example, set time limits so some will not use all the time. Do not allow ridicule or criticism of individuals. Discuss the ideas, not the personalities. Do not waste time on minor issues. Maintain a truly Christian atmosphere.

**The Task Dimension**

1. *Initiate or propose objectives and tasks.* Guide the group in definition of problems. Suggest ideas and procedures. Assign specific tasks. Set time limits for tasks to be completed or progress to be reported.

2. *Provide information and help.* Guide the group in seeking information that you do not have.

3. *Interpret, clarify, and offer explanations.* Clear up confusion, give examples, make applications of ideas.

4. *Summarize, or pull together, related ideas.* Restate ideas to help group members see how they relate. Help them recognize their points of agreement and make definite decisions.

5. *Provide reward and recognition.* When progress is made or a task is completed, never allow the fact to go unnoticed.
Emphasize the quality of the work rather than the personal qualities of the workers.

6. **Provide structure for evaluation.** Help group members evaluate their accomplishments in a realistic way without becoming either too discouraged or over-confident. Guide them to give the Lord glory for success, and yet be aware of their own contributions. Help them develop new and better skills as a result of their experience, whether it is positive or negative.

**Application**

9 Mark the following examples 1 for social dimension or 2 for task dimension.

**. . . a)** Before the meeting, the leader arranged the chairs in the small circle.

1) Social dimension

2) Task dimension

**. . . b)** Two members were appointed to find materials for the nursery class.

**. . . c)** The leader explained the duties of altar workers during the evangelistic campaign.

**. . . d)** The leader asked a new member to lead in a chorus to open the meeting.

**. . . e)** The leader suggested that each person take two minutes to express his or her opinion on an issue.

**. . . f)** The leader proposed that the group work on a series of weekly objectives for the coming year.
How Decisions Are Made in Groups

Objective 5. Recognize and evaluate decision-making styles.

Decision by Voting or Majority Rule

In many societies, the most common procedure for decision-making in a group is by formal voting. This may be done in a carefully structured meeting, using the form called parliamentary law or parliamentary procedure. In case you are not familiar with this process or have not been involved in its use recently, we will explain it briefly here. For your further information and reference, a brief outline of parliamentary procedure is given in the appendix at the end of the course.

When a meeting is conducted according to parliamentary procedure, the leader is known as the presiding officer, or the chairperson. The duty of this leader is to organize the meeting by giving permission for the members to speak, one at a time, and then calling for a vote to decide what action should be taken. This system assures that only one item can be considered at a time, that everyone who wishes may give an opinion, and that the action taken will represent the desires of the majority.

The presiding officer is not supposed to give his or her opinion or try to influence the vote. He or she may present a subject for discussion. For example, the group may be planning a youth retreat. The leader may suggest that the group make some decisions concerning the details. One member may indicate by standing or raising his or her hand that he or she wishes to speak. The leader gives permission.

“I move that we invite Reverend X to be the main speaker,” says the member. This is called a motion. That is, one member is proposing that the subject of inviting Reverend X be discussed and voted upon.

In formal parliamentary procedure, it is necessary to have two people agree on a motion before it can be discussed by the group. This agreement is called a second. Another member of the group says, “I second the motion.”
Then the leader says, “It has been moved and seconded that Reverend X be invited as the main speaker. Is there any discussion?”

One by one, the members may rise and give their opinions. Some may suggest different speakers. Some may prefer to have a panel of young people instead of a speaker, or a music program. When it seems that everyone who wishes to speak has had an opportunity, the leader asks, “Are you ready to vote?”

If there is no objection, he or she continues, “Everyone who is in favor of inviting Reverend X to be the main speaker, please raise your hand.” (Voting may be done by standing, by voice, or by writing the vote on slips of paper.) Everyone who is not in favor indicates his or her vote in the same way. In most cases the motion is said to carry, or win, if a majority of the members vote in favor of it.

Making decisions by majority rule seems fair and logical to many people. However, there are problems to be considered. Some members may feel very strongly against a decision that the group has voted to accept. They may feel that the voting is a kind of contest and they are the losers. Instead of truly cooperating with the majority, they may make a minority faction within the group. They may look for opportunities to compete and try to win some other point. This could keep the group divided instead of working in harmony.
Application

10 In the preceding discussion of voting and decision by majority rule, we see all the following as positive values except one. Which one is NOT a positive value?

a) It encourages discussion of the issues and full participation.
b) It provides a framework for orderly discussion, since rules of procedure are employed and only one issue is considered at a time.
c) It provides the leader with a mandate to act boldly, since what the majority decides is undoubtedly right.
d) It produces a decision that represents what the majority feels is the best decision.

Decision by Consensus

The weakness of majority rule is that when the meeting ends, someone is on the losing side. This situation can be avoided if the leader can guide the members to make decisions by consensus. Consensus does not mean that everyone agrees completely, but the feelings and attitudes of people are different when the meeting can end in a spirit of consensus rather than competition.

Consensus means that each member expresses a willingness to go along with the decision, even though he or she may not be completely convinced that it is the best one possible. In order to bring about this condition, the leader must be patient and understanding with all members. He or she must be sure that all have had real opportunities to explain how they feel and give their reasons. If they leave the meeting feeling understood, they are much more likely to cooperate and join in carrying out the group decision. Sometimes, people even get a certain satisfaction out of giving in if they are not made to feel downtrodden. They feel they got their points across and have made some contribution to the group processes.
Application

11 Suppose you are involved in a meeting in which a consensus is being sought. Discussion has proceeded until all the alternatives have been explored. A consensus is reached at last. How would such an ending differ from one in which the majority had won a vote? Write your answer in your notebook.

Decision by Unanimous Consent

In Christian work, something is possible that can seldom be attained in other types of organizations. It is possible because the goals of Christians are ultimately shared and because we can rely upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit to have agreement and unity. We know from Scripture and from practical experience that unity does not always exist. Actually, perfect unity is not necessary in every case, and we must be careful not to blame ourselves unduly if we do not achieve this happy state in all our group work. But we can be very tender and sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit. We can be constantly aware that His desire for us is that we

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace . . . equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:3, 12–13).
Application

12 Match the type of decision-making (right) with its appropriate example (left) based upon a leader’s words.

. . . . a) “It would seem that we have arrived at agreement on a course of action. While not exactly perfect, this course seems to be best, given the facts. I appreciate the willingness of all of you to support this course—even though it may not have seemed best”

. . . . b) “Having reached a point at which all agree as to the rightness of the proposed course, we may proceed”

. . . . c) “The vote has decided the issue: 16 for and 8 against. We shall proceed on the basis of this decision.”

1) Majority rule
2) Consensus
3) Unanimous consent
13 Turn to the appendix and read “Pointers on Parliamentary Procedure,” then answer the following questions.

a) List the five “Essential Principles of Parliamentary Law.”

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b) How many “Essential Rules of Discussion” are given?

c) How many methods of voting are given?

How many types of votes are listed?

The most votes cast regardless of the majority is called a

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d) When conducting a meeting, the chairperson never says, “You are out of order.” Instead, he or she should say,

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e) The presiding officer (or chairperson) prepares an

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f) The value of a set procedure in conducting business is that

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g) The rules for processing a main motion ensure that

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TRUE-FALSE. Place a T in the blank space in front of each true statement and an F in front of each false statement.

. . . . 1 Nehemiah’s love for Jerusalem, his vision for its restoration, and his boldness in initiating action as the hand of God was upon him give evidence of a divine call.

. . . . 2 We are permitted to see Nehemiah’s competence after he arrived in Jerusalem, for he sent a delegation to evaluate the damaged walls and recommend repair procedures.

. . . . 3 Although he was wealthy, the fact that Nehemiah was deeply moved by the plight of the poor is an indication of his empathy.

. . . . 4 The aspect of leadership we see when Nehemiah think through his course of action before he went to see the king is planning.

. . . . 5 Having evaluated the needs, developed a course of action, and shared his vision, Nehemiah permitted the available manpower resources to find an appropriate place of work.

. . . . 6 Nehemiah gave an accurate analysis of the situation: what was and what was needed. Then, he ignited his people’s spirits, motivating them with words that demonstrated that they shared common goals.

. . . . 7 The first stage in the problem-solving process is to define the problem, which includes analyzing the general condition, stating the specific problem, and deciding if action is needed.

. . . . 8 Having defined the problem, one moves to the second stage—selecting a solution—which includes considering alternatives, choosing a course of action, and implementing the action.
The third stage of problem-solving concerns evaluating the outcome of the action. If these three stages of problem solving have been followed, the outcome will be satisfactory.

Once an alternative solution is selected and action steps, possible consequences, and related matters are discussed, members may leave convinced that the problem is solved.

At a specified time, members should be given an opportunity to express their feelings regarding the outcome of the solution. If the outcome is generally good, appreciation should be expressed; if it tends to be negative, the leader should offer understanding and encourage further efforts.

In general, we can say that problem-solving relates to major needs, whereas decision-making concerns solutions to minor problems.

Nehemiah made decisions based upon adequate information, a clear understanding of the risks involved, clear communication with his co-workers regarding the issues, making a definite decision, and giving others an opportunity to express definite decisions.

Christian leaders may encounter certain obstacles to decision-making, among which are failure to form clear objectives, feelings of insecurity, fear of change, and fear that if they make evaluations they will appear to lack faith.

Generally, a Christian leader guides his or her group in decision-making, rarely involving the group in the process of making decisions.

While decision-making styles run the entire spectrum, from the extremely authoritarian to the extremely democratic, most decisive leaders employ the authoritarian style.
17 Even though members may be competent, experienced Christians, they should not assume more responsibility for decision-making, for this would be an indication of carnality and pride.

18 The concept of group dynamics rests upon the assumption that people are social and need each other, work best when they work together, and that as they act together they influence one another.

19 While people, being social, do like working together better than working alone, they do not normally produce the same high quality work that they do when working by themselves.

20 How the members of the group relate to one another, how they feel about one another, and how they feel about their place and contributions in the group concerns the task dimension of group dynamics.

21 Providing reward and recognition, as well as structure for evaluation, is part of the task dimension of group dynamics.

22 Decisions that are reached based on majority rule are generally arbitrary and leave the minority feeling beaten and resentful.

23 Consensus gives the impression that everyone is in agreement and that there is no dissent.

24 The process of arriving at a decision by majority vote does have some negative aspects, but generally it has much to commend it.

25 A decision by unanimous consent is a measure of the truly spiritual church. It is evidence of spiritual maturity and perfect unity.
Answers to Application Questions

7  a) depends upon the specific situation.

1  a) 6) Motivating others
    b) 2) Competence
    c) 3) A sense of calling
    d) 1) Empathy
    e) 4) Planning
    f) 5) Organizing

8  c) is true.

2  b) work on the wall was being hindered.
    e) equip the builders with defensive weapons.

9  a) 1) Social dimension
    b) 2) Task dimension
    c) 2) Task dimension
    d) 1) Social dimension
    e) 1) Social dimension
    f) 2) Task dimension

3  c) unlawful usury was being charged.
    d) require that the Law of God be observed.

10 c) It provides the leader with a mandate to act boldly, since what the majority decides is undoubtedly right.

4 a) things didn’t go well. Teachers felt dissatisfied.
    b) noise.
    c) inadequate discipline, careless parents, inadequate teaching.

11 Your answer. The difference may be subtle. In both cases, the issue would be aired fully. It would seem that the difference lies in the fact that consensus comes less dramatically and leaves no losers, whereas the vote divides a group into two parts: winners and losers. Handled appropriately, the majority-rule decision-making process can be an effective method; without sensitivity and Christian charity it can be divisive.
Now that you have completed the second unit, you are ready to answer the Unit Two Evaluation. Review the previous lessons before you begin. When you have completed the evaluation, check your answers using the answer key in the back of this book. Review the lesson material for any questions you answered incorrectly before continuing to Unit Three.
Unit 3
UNIT THREE: Goals: How Leaders Set Objectives and Work with People to Achieve Them

Lessons
7 Leaders Accept Responsibility
8 Leaders Work Toward Objectives
9 Leaders Are Motivated and Motivate Others