



Letters to the Next President #2 :: Beyond Approval Ratings **{Andy Stanley}**

INTRODUCTION

All leaders have some level of authority. They have the authority to make important decisions. They have the authority to assign others to a particular task. But not all leaders have influence. Not all leaders live with their words in alignment with their actions. In other words, leaders may have positional authority, but no moral authority. That raises the questions: Is authority more important than influence? Are you a leader because of your influence or your authority?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe a time when you had to follow a leader for whom you had no respect.
2. What does it mean to have *moral authority*? Is *moral authority* a requirement for leadership?
3. Read Nehemiah 5:6-13. The nobles and officials acquiesce to Nehemiah's request to stop charging interest. Why would his request be ignored in today's financial culture?
4. Read Nehemiah 5:14-19. Nehemiah's previous actions as governor influenced a favorable response from the nobles and officials because his words were reflected in his actions. How influential is a leader's character in deciding whether or not to follow that leader?
5. What aspects of your life and leadership do you need to re-examine in light of Nehemiah's story?

THINK ABOUT IT

Politicians often focus more on scoring higher approval ratings than on strengthening their own moral authority. As a result, their words may not reflect their actions. Nehemiah's extraordinary moral authority strengthened his leadership and influence to the point that he could ask those around him to make some unprofitable financial decisions—and they would acquiesce because they knew Nehemiah had made greater sacrifices. Whether at the office, among friends, or at home, people notice when our words don't align with our actions. Are your actions and words saying the same thing?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, identify an area in your life where your words are not reflecting your actions. What steps can you take to align your words with your actions?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

In spite of all of this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people. Remember me with favor, my God, for all I have done for these people.

Nehemiah 5:18-19