

**BIBLICAL MANAGERS AND THE FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT:
DO TODAY'S MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES APPLY?**

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After reviewing the four basic functions of management, the authors examine the accomplishments of several biblical managers to determine if they used these functions.

From the earliest writings in management literature, there have been innumerable variations of theories, concepts, and buzzwords. Fads in management have come and gone. Popular management authorities conflict in many areas. However, the basic functions of management—planning, organizing, leading, and controlling—are covered in some way in nearly every management class on every educational level. These functions appear to be the common threads that link all management authors and classes.

THE FOUR FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT

Planning. This function involves selecting future goals and objectives and deciding upon the actions necessary to achieve them. An old maxim states, “Management means looking ahead.” This is the first function and also the most important. Without a plan, there is no method or direction in an organization or in one's life.

Planning encompasses goal setting. This process includes formulating the organization's mission which legitimizes the firm to stakeholders and provides a driving force behind the organization's existence. The mission is an effective way to communicate top management's vision of where the organization should be in the future. Using this vision as a guiding light, managers are able to determine strategic, operational, and tactical goals and plans to enable managers to fulfill the organization's mission.

Organizing. Organizing follows closely after a well established plan. Activities in the organizing function include developing an organizational structure, delegating authority, determining the chain of command, establishing a span of management, and formalizing all of the above.

Once a plan is determined, a manager must organize the activities and the people required to accomplish the plan. The activities must be identified, classified, and then grouped in a logical manner. The manager then assigns the groups of activities to the people who can best carry them out. Finally, the manager must coordinate all the activities throughout the completion of the plan.

Leading. Leading is often defined as the ability to influence. A successful leader must use the power of his/her position both effectively and responsibly. The manager must have the ability to inspire and motivate those who follow by having a clear understanding of people. This applies to all leaders, no matter what their personal style of leadership might be.

An effective leader will embrace the organizational goals and advance them by affecting the attitudes and actions of others. Leaders often call upon their power base (French and Raven, 1959), including legitimate, reward, coercive, informational, expert, and charismatic factors, to influence the attitudes and behaviors of followers. Although many, sometimes conflicting,

theories help explain leadership and leader-follower interactions, one undeniable conclusion is that an effective leader is an essential element in the management process. The leader will motivate employees toward the goals established during the planning process.

Controlling. Controlling is in partnership with planning. A plan could not be accomplished effectively if it were not evaluated and corrected as needed. Controlling involves setting standards, measuring performance against those standards, and correcting variations from the standards and plans. It is important to note that controlling is not the last function, but a continuous challenge for management. Managers should anticipate control issues throughout the planning, organizing, and leading functions. By monitoring the environment on an on-going basis, managers can often avoid or decrease performance problems by adapting the plan, modifying the organizational structure, or adjusting the leadership style.

Management theory today emphasizes the importance of these four functions to the successful completion of management tasks. The following portion of this paper examines the managerial behavior of seven biblical characters to determine if they utilized the four functions in their time.

SEVEN MANAGERS IN SCRIPTURE

Noah (Genesis 6-10). Noah began his managing duties long before he is mentioned in Genesis 6-10. He was a righteous man in the midst of an evil generation. He ignored the influences of his external environment and planned his life around following God. His mission was to do what was right in God's sight, no matter what the consequences (Genesis 6:8-9). His obedience prepared him for the task that God called him to do.

Noah was to build an ark to spare His creation from total destruction. When God warned Noah to prepare for the flood, he began to plan and organize. Noah obviously was a good organizer. He gathered pairs of all animals for breeding. He also assembled clean animals to have as food for his family and sacrifices to God. He arranged the animals in correct locations on the ark to avoid problems. He had plenty of food for animals and people to survive the year that the ark was their home. (Genesis 6:14-8:17).

Noah led his family in the ways of God, and they were spared as well (Genesis 7:15). One of Noah's goals was to return those for whom he was responsible to dry land. Noah controlled his management plan by sending out the raven and the dove to determine when this goal could be accomplished. Noah's life is an example of managing family, materials, and other resources, as well as one's personal life.

Joseph (Genesis 37-50). Early in his life, Joseph knew he was his father's favorite son and that he was destined for a special place in God's service (Genesis 37:3,7,9). Joseph's brothers became jealous, and they sold him into slavery in Egypt (Genesis 37:28). Even as a prisoner, he was respected and, after a time, became known even to Pharaoh for his ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh had dreams which, with God's help, Joseph interpreted (Genesis 40:25). Joseph told Pharaoh that his country was going to experience seven years of abundance and seven years of famine for Egypt.

Joseph was the Old Testament's example of a crisis manager. He formulated a plan which Pharaoh deemed worthy to enact in all of Egypt. Pharaoh gave Joseph the authority to manage the plan, which was to collect one-fifth of the harvest in the good years to hold in reserve for use during the time of famine (Genesis 41:46-49). He organized the collection into barns, and during the famine, he was responsible for the allocation of the grain to the people as needed (Genesis 41:53-57).

During this time of famine Joseph was reunited with his family who still lived in Israel (Genesis 42:6). Joseph took the lead in enabling his family to move peaceably to the land of Goshen to be near him (Genesis 45:10). However, in so doing, he did not take advantage of his position.

Charles Swindoll describes Joseph's leadership by stating, "he planned ahead with wise objectivity, he submitted to authority with loyal accountability, he arranged for survival with personal integrity, and he accepted the challenge with innovative creativity" (Swindoll, 1990, p. 96)). In all his managing positions, Joseph proved himself an excellent planner and leader. He was a "hands-on" manager who controlled his followers' work by assuring his plans were carried out accurately and efficiently.

Joshua (Joshua 1-8). Joshua had the difficult task of succeeding a successful leader. Moses had been the faithful leader of the nation of Israel as he led them out of Egyptian bondage. Now, this great man of God was dead, and Joshua, his assistant, must attempt to take his place (Joshua 1:1-2).

Joshua accepted this tough assignment with a strong faith and confidence that he, like Moses, could accomplish the impossible. God told Joshua that he would defeat the strong walled city of Jericho in an unusual manner-by marching around the city, blowing trumpets, and shouting (Joshua 6:3-6). Joshua accepted this seemingly illogical plan and sold the vision to his followers (Joshua 6:6-7). When leading his army, he unknowingly was using Vroom's theory of expectancy (Vroom and Yetton, 1973). He was able to motivate the people to follow him by increasing their expectancy that their effort would lead to performance and that the performance would lead to the desired outcome. Joshua inspired them to believe whole heartedly in God.

He organized the march around the city, strictly following God's instructions (Joshua 6:8-20). The plan, of course, was successful. In terms of the control function, Joshua continued his careful heeding of God's instructions throughout his life as he compared all actions taken to the plans God gave him.

Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1-6). Nehemiah became the cupbearer to the king of Persia while the Israelites were in exile there (Nehemiah 1:11). This was an important position which allowed him access to the ear of the king. When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were torn down and the city was in ruins, he was very upset (Nehemiah 2:1-2). The king noticed and offered to help. Supplied with letters of safe passage and timbers from the king's forests, Nehemiah set off for Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:11).

Upon his arrival, he surveyed the damage and formulated a plan for the reconstruction (Nehemiah 2:17-18). He organized the citizens into groups, some of which would work while the

others stood guard. Then the groups would rotate (Nehemiah 3:1-32). People were assigned to work on the area of the wall closest to their homes. In this way, Nehemiah had dedicated workers because they could see that what they were doing directly affected their personal safety as well as the safety of their families. Nehemiah's organizational design incorporates several of the dimensions of job enrichment-skill variety, task significance, and autonomy (Hackman, Oldham, Janson, and Purdy, 1975).

During the project, two local Gentiles who were jealous of how much the Israelites were accomplishing opposed Nehemiah and tried to distract him from the job at hand (Nehemiah 1:10; 4:1-3). Nehemiah did not give in to their pressure. He was a strong leader who kept his plan on track despite the critics' attack. He is remembered as a governor of Israel who was responsible not only for the rebuilding of the walls, but also for restoring the values of his people through God-fearing leadership and dedication to controlling the plans that God had given him.

Abraham (Genesis 12-22). God called Abraham to leave his homeland and to go to a place where He would lead him (Genesis 12:1). Through his faithfulness to God's call, Abraham became extremely wealthy and had to manage an abundance of land, animals, and servants. His nephew, Lot, was a partner in all that he had. When the servants of Abraham and the servants of Lot began to quarrel, Abraham discerned that too many people together could result in unnecessary strife (Genesis 13:7). He planned to separate from Lot and go whichever way the Lot did not choose. Lot chose the good fertile ground and left the high rocky ground to his uncle (Genesis 13:9-11). Unswayed, Abraham agreed and organized his servants and family. This action was an example of the control function: when he discerned possible troubles in his external environment, he applied a modified plan for reaching his goal. He was able to change strategies to adapt to a changing environment. God continued to bless Abraham and he became the father of the nation of Israel.

Paul (Acts-Hebrews). Paul is one of the leading characters in the New Testament as well as the principal author. When Paul was persecuting Christians, God called him to change his lifestyle and become His voice to the Gentiles (Acts 9:3-19). Paul heeded God's call. The Book of Acts records the missionary journeys of Paul. Paul's plan was to evangelize as much of the world as possible with the Good News of salvation. He charted geographical routes, the best modes of transportation, and the best methods in which to reach various groups of people. He organized and led the journeys himself. His partners included Barnabus (Acts 9-15), Timothy (Acts 16), and John Mark (Acts 12:12-13; 15:37; 2 Timothy 4:11), all of whom became great champions of the faith. On the journeys, Paul illustrated his ability to control by often conceding to time constraints and reformulating his strategy. A contingency plan always emerged. If he was unable to make all his scheduled stops on a particular journey, he would certainly not miss those cities again. Paul's managerial strength was in his leadership. He was able to visualize how things should be and would find ways to make them happen. In Romans 12:11, Paul writes, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Paul was very serious about his business, and he called other Christians to be so as well.

Jesus (Matthew-John). During His earthly ministry, Jesus became a manager in many respects. His most consuming and overarching mission was the salvation of the world through His sacrificial death and His resurrection. All the plans that Jesus made contributed to this goal in

some way. He organized an unlikely group of disciples whom He empowered to be His messengers. He led these men by understanding and optimizing each one's unique talents and by making them aware of their important task of evangelism. He led them to a greater knowledge of who He was and the principles of right living. Even when all looked hopeless, Jesus was in control and His plan was ultimately successful.

The fundamental functions of management can be applied to any area of a person's individual or corporate life. They were exhibited in the lives of the aforementioned and other biblical managers. These men and women were willing for God to use their abilities as managers for His service. They managed their personal lives, the people who followed them, the materials, the time available, and other areas that one would expect of a modern manager. When a subject such as management can be seen in different applications, it is easier to appreciate its diversity and the fact that its importance is not exclusive to those in the world of business. Although a modern manager may not be commissioned by God to perform a specific task, the Lord can give the ability and the knowledge necessary for the work. One of the most fundamental verses in Scripture for a businessman or woman is Colossians 3:23: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for man."

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