

*Marks of
A Good Leader*



Lead by Example

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Forward

In 1954 when my wife and I were married, we attended a Bible College to prepare for the ministry.

In this school we taught that we should not receive a salary or take up an offering for our services, but to trust God to supply Our financial needs.

That is what we did for more than 30 years. I could relate many incidences of how God took care of us during those times of ministry.

Everywhere we lived, where a college was nearby, we attended until we obtained teaching certificates and then taught school to help meet our needs in the ministry.

It seems that many ministry leaders major in receiving money. This is a discouragement to many people. May God help us all.

Today I still give my time to minister in writing and grading lessons for Great Commission Bible College. I was able to teach in the public school until age 80.

God will meet the need of those leaders who trust him.

Chapter 1



How God was preparing Moses for leadership.

Exodus 3:1

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he went deep into the wilderness near Sinai, the mountain of God.

What a contrast between Moses' life as an Egyptian prince and his life as a Midianite shepherd! As a prince he had everything done for him; he was the famous son of an Egyptian princess.

As a shepherd he had to do everything for himself; he was holding the very job he had been taught to despise (Genesis 43:32; Genesis 46:32-34), and he lived as an unknown foreigner.

What a humbling experience this must have been for Moses! But God was preparing him for leadership. Living the life of a shepherd and nomad, Moses learned about the ways of the people he would be leading and also about life in the desert. Moses couldn't appreciate this lesson, but God was getting him ready to free Israel from Pharaoh's grasp.

Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where God would give the people his revealed law (Exodus 3:12).

Leaders should focus on obedience more than results.

Exodus 6:9-12

So Moses told the people what the Lord had said, but they wouldn't listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the increasing burden of their slavery.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go back to Pharaoh, and tell him to let the people of Israel leave Egypt."

"But Lord!" Moses objected. "My own people won't listen to me anymore. How can I expect Pharaoh to listen? I'm no orator!"

When Moses gave God's message to the people, they were too discouraged to listen. The Hebrews didn't want to hear any more about God and his promises because the last time they listened to Moses, all they got was more work and greater suffering.

Sometimes a clear message from God is followed by a period when no change in the situation is apparent. During that time, seeming setbacks may turn people away from wanting to hear more about God. If you are a leader, don't give up. Keep bringing people God's message as Moses did.

By focusing on God who must be obeyed rather than on the results to be achieved, good leaders see beyond temporary setbacks and reversals.

Think how hard it must have been for Moses to bring God's message to Pharaoh when his own people had trouble believing it. Eventually the Hebrews believed that God had sent Moses, but for a time he must have felt very alone.

Moses obeyed God, however, and what a difference it made! When the chances for success appear slim, remember that anyone can obey God when the task is easy and everyone is behind it. Only those with persistent faith can obey when the task seems impossible.

Spiritual leaders should be encouraged.

Exodus 17:10-16

So Joshua did what Moses had commanded. He led his men out to fight the army of Amalek. Meanwhile Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of a nearby hill.

As long as Moses held up the staff with his hands, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites gained the upper hand.

Moses' arms finally became too tired to hold up the staff any longer. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side, holding up his hands until sunset.

As a result, Joshua and his troops were able to crush the army of Amalek.

Aaron and Hur stood by Moses' side and held up his arms to ensure victory against Amalek. We need to "lift up the hands" of our spiritual leaders as well. Shouldering some responsibility, lending a word of encouragement, or offering a prayer are ways of refreshing spiritual leaders in their work.

Chapter 2



Leaders should encourage participation.

Exodus 29:42

"This is to be a daily burnt offering given from generation to generation. Offer it in the Lord's presence at the Tabernacle entrance, where I will meet you and speak with you.

God's action in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt showed his great desire to be with them and protect them. Throughout the Bible, God shows that he is not an absentee landlord. He wants to live among us, even in our hearts. Don't exclude God from your life. Allow him to be your God as you obey his Word and communicate with him in prayer. Let him be your resident landlord.

Leaders should follow-up on assigned work. "

Exodus 39:43

Moses inspected all their work and blessed them because it had been done as the Lord had commanded him.

Moses inspected the finished work, saw that it was done the way God wanted, and then blessed the people. A good leader follows up on

assigned tasks and gives rewards for good work. In whatever responsible position you find yourself, follow up to make sure that tasks are completed as intended, and show your appreciation to the people who have helped.

Preparing for transition in leadership

Numbers 27:15-21

Then Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, the God of the spirits of all living things, please appoint a new leader for the community. Give them someone who will lead them into battle, so the people of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

The Lord replied, "Take Joshua son of Nun, who has the Spirit in him, and lay your hands on him. Present him to Eleazar the priest before the whole community, and publicly commission him with the responsibility of leading the people."

Transfer your authority to him so the whole community of Israel will obey him. When direction from the Lord is needed, Joshua will stand before Eleazar the priest, who will determine the Lord's will by means of sacred lots. This is how Joshua and the rest of the community of Israel will discover what they should do."

Moses asked God to appoint a leader who was capable of directing both external and internal affairs—one who could lead them in battle, but who would also care for their needs. The Lord responded by appointing Joshua.

Many people want to be known as leaders. Some are very capable of reaching their goals, while others care deeply for the people in their charge. The best leaders are both goal-oriented and people-oriented.

Moses did not want to leave his work without making sure a new leader was ready to replace him. First he asked God to help him find a replacement. Then, when Joshua was selected, Moses gave him a variety of tasks to ease the transition into his new position. Moses also clearly told the people that Joshua had the authority and the ability to lead the nation.

His display of confidence in Joshua was good for both Joshua and the people. To minimize leadership gaps, anyone in a leadership position should train others to carry on the duties should he or she suddenly or eventually have to leave.

While you have the opportunity, follow Moses' pattern: pray, select, develop, and commission.

Deut. 3:26-28

But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.

Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.

God had made it clear that Moses would not enter the promised land (Numbers 20:12). So God told Moses to commission Joshua as the new leader and encourage him in this new role.

This is a good example to churches and organizations who must eventually replace their leaders.

Good leaders prepare their people to function without them by discovering those with leadership potential, providing the training they need, and looking for ways to encourage them.

Joshua 1:2

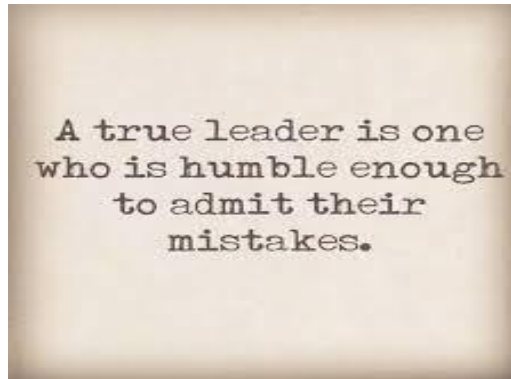
"Now that my servant Moses is dead, you must lead my people across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them.

Because Joshua had assisted Moses for many years, he was well prepared to take over the leadership of the nation. Changes in leadership are common in many organizations.

At such times, a smooth transition is essential for the establishment of the new administration. This doesn't happen unless new leaders are trained. If you are currently in a leadership position, begin preparing someone to take your place.

Then, when you leave or are promoted, operations can continue to run efficiently. If you want to be a leader, learn from others so that you will be prepared when the opportunity comes.

Chapter 3



Marks of a good leader?

Numbers 27:15-17

Then Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, the God of the spirits of all living things, please appoint a new leader for the community. Give them someone who will lead them into battle, so the people of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

Moses asked God to appoint a leader who was capable of directing both external and internal affairs—one who could lead them in battle, but who would also care for their needs. The Lord responded by appointing Joshua.

Many people want to be known as leaders. Some are very capable of reaching their goals, while others care deeply for the people in their charge. The best leaders are both goal-oriented and people-oriented.

Deut. 13:1-3

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to

pass, whereof he spoke unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proves you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Attractive leaders are not always led by God. Moses warned the Israelites against false prophets who encouraged worship of other gods. New ideas from inspiring people may sound good, but we must judge them by whether or not they are consistent with God's Word.

When people claim to speak for God today, check them in these areas: Are they telling the truth? Is their focus on God? Are their words consistent with what you already know to be true? Some people speak the truth while directing you toward God, but others speak persuasively while directing you toward themselves.

It is even possible to say the right words but still lead people in the wrong direction. God is not against new ideas, but he is for discernment. When you hear a new, attractive idea, examine it carefully before getting too excited. False prophets are still around today. The wise person will carefully test ideas against the truth of God's Word.

Don't try to lead the loan.

Deut. 1:9-12

And I spoke unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone: The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

**(The Lord God of your fathers makes you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)
How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden,
and your strife?**

It was a tremendous burden for Moses to lead the nation by himself. He could not accomplish the task single-handedly.

Like nations, as organizations and churches grow, they become increasingly complex. Conflicting needs and quarrels arise. No longer can one leader make all the decisions.

Like Moses, you may have a natural tendency to try to do all the work alone. You may be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help. Moses made a wise decision to share the leadership with others.

Rather than trying to handle larger responsibilities alone, look for ways of sharing the load so that others may exercise their God-given gifts and abilities.

The inner qualities of a good leader

Deut. 1:13-18

Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. [14] And ye answered me, and said, the thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. [15] So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.

And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.

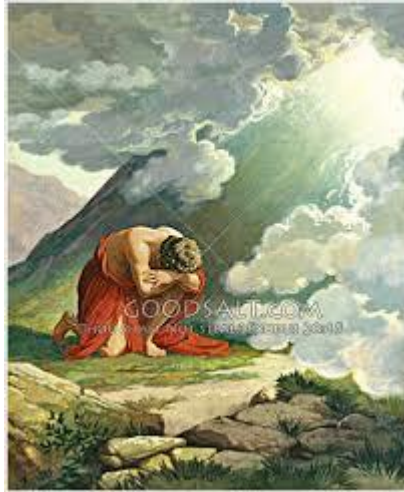
Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it. And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

Moses identified some of the inner qualities of good leaders:

- (1) Wisdom,
- (2) Understanding, and
- (3) Respect.

These characteristics differ markedly from the ones that often help elect leaders today: good looks, wealth, popularity, willingness to do anything to get to the top. The qualities Moses identified should be evident in us as we lead, and we should look for them in those we elect to positions of leadership.

Chapter 4



Joshua's qualifications to lead Israel

Joshua 1:1-5

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spoke unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Joshua succeeded Moses as Israel's leader. What qualifications did he have to become the leader of a nation?

- (1) God appointed him (Numbers 27:18-23).
- (2) He was one of only two living eyewitnesses to the Egyptian plagues and the exodus from Egypt.
- (3) He was Moses' personal aide for 40 years.
- (4) Of the 12 spies, only he and Caleb showed complete confidence that God would help them conquer the land.

God is our real leader.

Judges 1:1

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?

The people of Israel had finally entered and taken control of the land promised to their ancestors (Genesis 12:7; Exodus 3:16-17).

The book of Judges continues the story of this conquest that began in the book of Joshua. Through God's strength, the Israelites had conquered many enemies and overcome many difficulties, but their work was not yet finished.

They had effectively met many political and military challenges, but facing spiritual challenges was more difficult. The unholy but attractive life-style of the Canaanites proved more dangerous than their military might.

The Israelites gave in to the pressure and compromised their faith. If we attempt to meet life's challenges with human effort alone, we will find the pressures and temptations around us too great to resist.

Soon after Joshua died, Israel began to lose its firm grip on the land. Although Joshua was a great commander, the people missed his spiritual leadership even more than his military skill, for he had kept the people focused on God and his purposes.

Joshua had been the obvious successor to Moses, but there was no obvious successor to Joshua. During this crisis of leadership, Israel had to learn that no matter how powerful and wise the current leader was, their real leader was God.

We often focus our hope and confidence on some influential leader, failing to realize that in reality it is God who is in command.

Acknowledge God as your commander in chief, and avoid the temptation of relying too heavily on human leaders, regardless of their spiritual wisdom.

The Canaanites were all the people who lived in Canaan (the promised land). They lived in city-states where each city had its own government, army, and laws. One reason Canaan was so difficult to conquer was that each city had to be defeated individually.

There was no single king who could surrender the entire country into the hands of the Israelites.

Canaan's greatest threat to Israel was not its army, but its religion. Canaanite religion idealized evil traits: cruelty in war, sexual immorality, selfish greed, and materialism. It was a "me first, anything goes" society. Obviously, the religions of Israel and Canaan could not coexist.

Chapter 5



The leadership of Othniel

Judges 3:9

And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

Othniel was Israel's first judge. In Judges 1:13 we read that he volunteered to lead an attack against a fortified city. Here he was to lead the nation back to God. Othniel had a rich spiritual heritage—his uncle was Caleb, a man with unwavering faith in God (Numbers 13:30; Numbers 14:24).

Othniel's leadership brought the people back to God and freed them from the oppression of the king of Aram, Naharaim. But after Othniel's death, it didn't take the Israelites long to fall back into their neighbors' comfortable but sinful ways.

Prejudice can keep you from seeing those qualified to lead.

Judges 4:4

And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

The Bible records several women who held national leadership positions, and Deborah was an exceptional woman.

Obviously she was the best person for the job, and God chose her to lead Israel. God can choose anyone to lead his people, young or old, man or woman. Don't let your prejudices get in the way of those God may have chosen to lead you.

Leaders always take the brunt of criticism.

1 Samuel 10:26-27

And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

But the children of Belial said, how shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

Some men became Saul's constant companions, while others despised him.

Criticism will always be directed toward those who lead because they are out in front.

At this time, Saul took no notice of those who seemed to be against him, although later he would become consumed with jealousy (1 Samuel 19:1-3; 1 Samuel 26:17-21).

As you lead, listen to constructive criticism, but don't spend valuable time and energy worrying about those who may oppose you. Instead, focus your attention on those who are ready and willing to help.

The leadership of David in molding a band of outlaws

1 Samuel 22:2

And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

Those in distress, in debt, or discontented joined David, who himself was an outlaw. These people were outcasts themselves and could only improve their lot by helping David become king. David's control over this band of men again shows his resourcefulness and ability to lead and motivate others.

It is difficult enough to build an army out of good men, but it takes even greater leadership to build one out of the kind of men that followed David. This group eventually formed the core of his military leadership and produced several "mighty men" (2 Samuel 23:8ff).

A good leader looks beyond the appearances to character.

2 Samuel 15:5-6

And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. [6] And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Absalom's political strategy was to steal the hearts of the people with his good looks, grand entrances, apparent concern for justice, and friendly embraces.

Many were fooled and switched their allegiance. Later, however, Absalom proved to be an evil ruler.

We need to evaluate our leaders to make sure their charisma is not a mask covering graft, deception, or hunger for power. Make sure that underneath their style and charm, they are able to make good decisions and handle people wisely.

Good leaders accept responsibility.

1 Chron. 21:8

And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

When David realized his sin, he took full responsibility, admitted he was wrong, and asked God to forgive him.

Many people want to add God and the benefits of Christianity to their lives without acknowledging their personal sin and guilt. But confession and repentance must come before receiving forgiveness.

Like David, we must take full responsibility for our actions and confess them to God before we can expect him to forgive us and continue his work in us.

Chapter 6



A leader must not ignore their families.

1 Kings 1:6

And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, why hast thou done so? And he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom.

God-fearing people like David and Samuel were used by God to lead nations, but nevertheless they had problems in family relationships. God-fearing leaders cannot take for granted the spiritual well-being of their children.

They are used to having others follow their orders, but they cannot expect their children to manufacture faith upon request. Moral and spiritual character takes years to build, and it requires constant attention and patient discipline.

David served God well as a king, but as a parent he often failed both God and his children. Don't let your service to God even in leadership positions take up so much of your time and energy that you neglect your other God-given responsibilities.

Because David had never interfered by opposing or even questioning his son, Adonijah did not know how to work within limits.

The result was that he always wanted his own way, regardless of how it affected others.

Adonijah did whatever he wanted and paid no respect to God's wishes. An undisciplined child may look cute to his or her parents, but an undisciplined adult destroys himself and others.

As you set limits for your children, you make it possible for them to develop the self-restraint they will need in order to control themselves later. Discipline your children carefully while they are young, so that they will grow into self-disciplined adults.

Is your leader self-serving or God-serving?

1 Kings 2:5-7

Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.

Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace. But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.

Joab epitomizes those who are ruthless in accomplishing their goals. His strength was his only code, and winning the battle his only law. He wanted to get power for himself and protect it. In contrast, Barzillai stands for those who are loyal to God and live by his standards.

When offered glory, for example, he unselfishly asked that it be given to his son. Is your leadership self-serving or God-serving?

Leaders put best interests of people above their own interest.

1 Kings 12:15-19

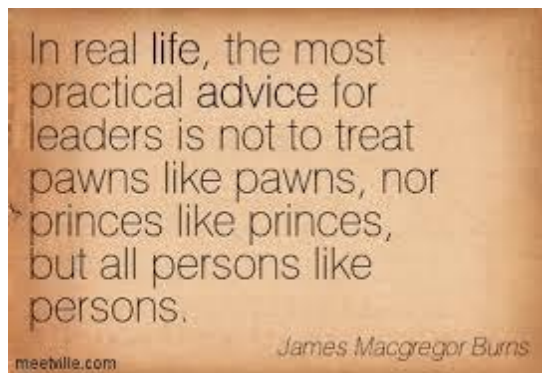
Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, what portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

Chapter 7



Advice for leaders

2 Chron. 19:5-10

And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,

And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem. And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do and ye shall not trespass.

Jehoshaphat delegated some of the responsibilities for ruling and judging the people, but he warned his appointees that they were accountable to God for the standards they used to judge others.

Jehoshaphat's advice is helpful for all leaders:

- (1) Realize you are judging for God (2 Chron. 19:6);
- (2) Be impartial and honest (2 Chron. 19:7);
- (3) Be faithful (2 Chron. 19:9);
- (4) act only out of fear of God, not men (2 Chron. 19:9). God holds us accountable for the authority we exercise.

2 Chron. 19:8

Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

Jehoshaphat appointed priests and Levites to help in administering civil laws. Many years earlier, Moses had chosen men who were capable, faithful, and honest to help him judge disputes among the people (Exodus 18:21-22).

Obviously the best kind of leader is one who always acts with reverence for God. Effective leaders get the job done; faithful leaders make sure the job is done in God's way with God's timing. They are careful to instill God's wisdom in future leaders and build God's values into the entire community.

Lack of spiritual leadership leads to ruin.

1 Kings 22:52-53

And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:

For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

The book of 1 Kings begins with a nation united under David, the most devout king in Israel's history.

The book ends with a divided kingdom and the death of Ahab, the most wicked king of all. What happened?

The people forgot to acknowledge God as their ultimate leader; they appointed human leaders who ignored God; and then they conformed to the life-styles of these evil leaders.

Occasional wrongdoing gradually turned into a way of life. Their blatant wickedness could be met only with judgment from God, who allowed enemy nations to arise and defeat Israel and Judah in battle as punishment for their sins.

Failing to acknowledge God as our ultimate leader is the first step toward ruin.

Godly leaders don't put up obstacles to faith.

2 Kings 15:18

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Menahem, like the kings before him, led his people into sin—"He did evil in the eyes of the LORD." What a horrible epitaph for a leader! Leaders profoundly affect the people they serve.

They can either encourage or discourage devotion to God both by their example and by the structure they give their organization. Good leaders put up no obstacles to faith in God or to right living.

Chapter 8



It is important to show respect for leaders.

1 Chron. 10:11-12

But when the people of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, their warriors went out and brought the bodies of Saul and his three sons back to Jabesh.

Then they buried their remains beneath the oak tree at Jabesh, and they fasted for seven days.

The actions of the valiant warriors who brought back and buried the bodies of King Saul and his sons should encourage us to respect our God-given leaders.

David showed respect for Saul's position, even when Saul was chasing him to kill him (1 Samuel 26).

How easy it is to be critical of those in authority over us, focusing only on their weaknesses.

We cannot excuse sin, but we should respect the positions of those in authority, whether at work, at church, or in government. 1

1 Thess. 5:12-13 gives instructions for honoring church leaders.
Romans 13:1ff gives instructions for relating to government leaders.

A week leader is threatened by competent subordinates.

1 Chron. 12:1

The following men joined David at Ziklag while he was hiding from Saul son of Kish. They were among the warriors who fought beside David in battle.

Ziklag was a city in Philistia where David had escaped to hide from Saul. Achish, the Philistine ruler of the area was happy to have a famous Israelite warrior defect to his land.

He did not know, however, that David was only pretending loyalty. Achish gave the city of Ziklag to David, his family, and his army (1 Samuel 27:5-7). David's whereabouts were not a great secret, and many loyal followers joined him there.

David surrounded himself with great warriors, the best of the Israelite army.

What qualities made them worthy to be David's warriors and servants?

(1) They had practiced long and hard to perfect their skills (with bow, sling, and spear);

(2) They were mentally tough and determined (“Their faces were the faces of lions,” 1 Chron. 12:8);

(3) They were physically in shape (“as swift as gazelles,” 1 Chron. 12:8);

(4) They were dedicated to serving God and David.

Weak leaders are easily threatened by competent subordinates, but strong leaders surround themselves with the best. They are not intimidated by able and competent followers.

A good leader involves others in leadership.

1 Chron. 13:1

David consulted with all his officials, including the generals and captains of his army.

David took time to confer with all his officers. As king, he had ultimate authority and could have given orders on his own, but he chose to involve others in leadership.

Perhaps this is why there was unanimous support for his decisions (1 Chron. 13:1-5). When we are in charge, it is tempting to make unilateral decisions, pushing through our own opinions. But effective leaders listen carefully to others’ opinions, and they encourage others to participate in making decisions. Of course, we should always consult God first.

The parallel accounts of moving the ark (2 Samuel 5; 2 Samuel 6) shows that David's building projects were completed *before* he brought the ark to Jerusalem.

The writer of Chronicles puts the moving of the ark first in order to highlight David's spiritual accomplishments and relationship to God.

Nehemiah was a model of leadership.

Neh. 1:1

These are the memoirs of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In late autumn of the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was at the fortress of Susa.

Nehemiah wasn't the first of the exiles to return to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel had led the first group back in 538 B.C., more than 90 years earlier (Ezra 1-2).

Ezra followed with a second group in 458 B.C. (Ezra 7), and here Nehemiah was ready to lead the third major return to Jerusalem (445 B.C.). When he arrived after a three-month journey, he saw the completed temple and became acquainted with others who had returned to their homeland.

But Nehemiah also found a disorganized group of people and a defenseless city with no walls to protect it. Before the exile, Israel had its own language, king, army, and identity. At this time it had none of these.

What the Jews lacked most was leadership; there was no one to show them where to start and what direction to take as they tried to rebuild their city.

As soon as Nehemiah arrived he began a back to the basics program. He helped care for the people's physical needs by setting up a fair system of government and rebuilding Jerusalem's walls.

He also cared for their spiritual needs by rebuilding broken lives. Nehemiah is a model of committed, God-honoring leadership, and his book contains many useful lessons for today.

Neh. 13:31

I also made sure that the supply of wood for the altar was brought at the proper times and that the first part of the harvest was collected for the priests.

Remember this in my favor, O my God.

Nehemiah's life story provides many principles of effective leadership that are still valid today.

(1) *Have a clear purpose and keep evaluating it in light of God's will.* Nothing prevented Nehemiah from staying on track.

(2) *Be straightforward and honest.* Everyone knew exactly what Nehemiah needed, and he spoke the truth even when it made his goal harder to achieve.

(3) *Live above reproach.* The accusations against Nehemiah were empty and false.

(4) *Be a person of constant prayer*, deriving power and wisdom from your contact with God. Everything Nehemiah did glorified God.

Leadership appears glamorous at times, but it is often lonely, thankless, and filled with pressures to compromise values and standards. Nehemiah was able to accomplish a huge task against incredible odds because he learned that there is no success without risk of failure, no reward without hard work, no opportunity without criticism, and no true leadership without trust in God.

This book is about rebuilding the wall of a great city, but it is also about spiritual renewal, rebuilding a people's dependence on God. When we take our eyes off God, our lives begin to crumble.

Chapter 9



A good leader will lead by example.

Neh. 3:1

Then Eliashib the high priest and the other priests started to rebuild at the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set up its doors, building the wall as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and the Tower of Hananel.

The high priest is the first person mentioned who pitched in and helped with the work. Spiritual leaders must lead not only by word, but also by action.

The Sheep Gate was the gate used to bring sheep into the city to the temple for sacrifices. Nehemiah had the priests repair this gate and section of the wall, respecting the priests' area of interest and at the same time emphasizing the priority of worship.

All the citizens of Jerusalem did their part on the huge job of rebuilding the city wall. Similarly, the work of the church requires every member's effort in order for the body of Christ to function effectively (1 Cor. 12:12-27). The body needs you! Are you doing your part? Find a place to serve God, and start contributing whatever time, talent, and money is needed.

Jerusalem was a large city, and because many roads converged there, it required many gates.

The wall on each side of these heavy wooden gates was taller and thicker so soldiers could stand guard to defend the gates against attack. Sometimes two stone towers guarded the gate. In times of peace, the city gates were hubs of activity—city council was held there, and shopkeepers set up their wares at the entrance.

Building the city walls and gates was not only a military priority, but also a boost for trade and commerce.

Leaders need courage, so pray for them.

Neh. 6:10-13

Later I went to visit Shemaiah son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home. He said, "Let us meet together inside the Temple of God and bolt the doors shut. Your enemies are coming to kill you tonight."

But I replied, "Should someone in my position run away from danger? Should someone in my position enter the Temple to save his life? No, I won't do it!" I realized that God had not spoken to him, but that he had uttered this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

They were hoping to intimidate me and make me sin by following his suggestion. Then they would be able to accuse and discredit me.

Shemaiah warned Nehemiah of danger and told him to hide in the temple. Nehemiah wisely tested the message, exposing it as another trick of the enemy.

People may misuse God's name by saying they know God's will when they have other motives. Examine self-proclaimed messengers from God to see if they stand up to the test of being consistent with what is revealed in God's Word.

Nehemiah did not have the full support of the people. Shemaiah (Neh. 6:10), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), and many of the nobles (Neh. 6:17) were working against him.

When Nehemiah was attacked personally, he refused to give in to fear and flee to the temple.

According to God's law, it would have been wrong for Nehemiah to go into the temple to hide because he wasn't a priest (Numbers 18:22).

If he had run for his life, he would have undermined the courage he was trying to instill in the people.

Leaders are targets for attacks. Make it a practice to pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Request God to give them strength to stand against personal attacks and temptation. They need God-given courage to overcome fear.

Look for integrity and reverence in leaders.

Neh. 7:2

I gave the responsibility of governing Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah, the commander of the fortress, for he was a faithful man who feared God more than most.

Integrity and fear of God were the key character traits that qualified these men to govern Jerusalem. People of integrity can be trusted to

carry out their work; God-fearing people can be expected to do so in line with God's priorities.

These men had both qualities. If you are in a position of selecting leaders, look for integrity and reverence as two of the most important qualifications. Although other qualities may seem more impressive, integrity and reverence pass the test of time.

Good leaders seek out wise advisers.

Proverbs 11:14

Without wise leadership, a nation falls; with many counselors, there is safety.

A good leader needs and uses wise advisers. One person's perspective and understanding is severely limited; he or she may not have all the facts or may be blinded by bias, emotions, or wrong impressions.

To be a wise leader at home, at church, or at work, seek the counsel of others and be open to their advice. Then, after considering all the facts, make your decision

Chapter 10



Leaders must be held accountable for how they lead.

Isaiah 3:14

The leaders and the princes will be the first to feel the Lord's judgment. "You have ruined Israel, which is my vineyard. You have taken advantage of the poor, filling your barns with grain extorted from helpless people.

The elders and leaders were responsible to help people, but instead they stole from the poor. Because they were unjust, Isaiah said the leaders would be the first to receive God's judgment.

Leaders will be held accountable. If you are in a position of leadership, you must lead according to God's just commands. Corruption will bring God's wrath, especially if others follow your example.

Why is justice so important in the Bible?

(1) Justice is part of God's nature; it is the way he runs the universe.

(2) It is a natural desire in every person. Even as sinners, we all want justice for ourselves.

(3) When government and church leaders are unjust, the poor and powerless suffer. Thus they are hindered from worshipping God.

(4) God holds the poor in high regard. They are the ones most likely to turn to him for help and comfort. Injustice, then, attacks God's children.

When we do nothing to help the oppressed, we are in fact joining with the oppressor. Because we follow a just God, we must uphold justice.

Leaders must respect those they serve.

Micah 3:2-3

But you are the very ones who hate good and love evil. You skin my people alive and tear the flesh off their bones.

You eat my people's flesh, cut away their skin, and break their bones. You chop them up like meat for the cooking pot.

The leaders had no compassion or respect for those they were supposed to serve. They were treating the people miserably in order to satisfy their own desires, and then they had the gall to ask for God's help when they found themselves in trouble.

We, like the leaders, should not treat God like a light switch to be turned on only as needed. Instead, we should always rely on him.

Religious leaders versus Christian leaders

Matthew 15:13-14

Jesus replied, "Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be rooted up, so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch."

Jesus told his disciples to leave the Pharisees alone because the Pharisees were blind to God's truth.

Anyone who listened to their teaching would risk spiritual blindness as well.

Not all religious leaders clearly see God's truth. Make sure that those you listen to and learn from are those with good spiritual eyesight—they teach and follow the principles of Scripture.

Good leaders are servants.

Matthew 20:27

And whoever wants to be first must become your slave.

Jesus described leadership from a new perspective. Instead of using people, we are to serve them. Jesus' mission was to serve others and to give his life away.

A real leader has a servant's heart. Servant leaders appreciate others' worth and realize that they're not above any job. If you see something that needs to be done, don't wait to be asked. Take the initiative and do it like a faithful servant.

Luke 22:24-27

And they began to argue among themselves as to who would be the greatest in the coming Kingdom. Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men order their people around, and yet they are called 'friends of the people.'

But among you, those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant.

Normally the master sits at the table and is served by his servants. But not here! For I am your servant.

The world's system of leadership is very different from leadership in God's kingdom. Worldly leaders are often selfish and arrogant as they claw their way to the top.

(Some kings in the ancient world gave themselves the title "Benefactor.") But among Christians, the leader is to be the one who *serves* best.

There are different styles of leadership—some lead through public speaking, some through administering, some through relationships—but every Christian leader needs a servant's heart. Ask the people you lead how you can serve them better.

Leaders should put more emphasis on Christ than their own ministry.

John 3:30

He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

John's willingness to decrease in importance shows unusual humility. Pastors and other Christian leaders can be tempted to focus more on the success of their ministries than on Christ.

Beware of those who put more emphasis on their own achievements than on God's kingdom.

Leaders sometimes get bogged down in details.

Acts 6:2-4

So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers.

"We apostles should spend our time preaching and teaching the word of God, not administering a food program," they said.

"Now look around among yourselves, brothers, and select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this business.

Then we can spend our time in prayer and preaching and teaching the word."

Chapter 11



Qualification for leaders

Acts 6:3

"Now look around among yourselves, brothers, and select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this business.

This administrative task was not taken lightly. Notice the requirements for the men who were to handle the food program: full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

People who carry heavy responsibilities and work closely with others should have these qualities. We must look for spiritually mature and wise men and women to lead our churches.

Titus 1:5-9

I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you.

An elder must be well thought of for his good life. He must be faithful to his wife, and his children must be believers who are not wild or rebellious.

An elder must live a blameless life because he is God's minister. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or greedy for money.

He must enjoy having guests in his home and must love all that is good. He must live wisely and be fair. He must live a devout and disciplined life.

He must have a strong and steadfast belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with right teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.

Paul briefly described some qualifications that the elders or overseers should have. Paul had given Timothy a similar set of instructions for the church in Ephesus (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 1 Tim. 5:22).

Notice that most of the qualifications involve character, not knowledge or skill. A person's life-style and relationships provide a window into his or her character.

Consider these qualifications as you evaluate a person for a position of leadership in your church.

It is important to have leaders who can effectively preach God's Word, but it is even more important to have those who can live out God's Word and be examples for others to follow.

Paul chose Spirit-led church leaders.

Acts 14:23

Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church and prayed for them with fasting, turning them over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had come to trust.

Part of the reason that Paul and Barnabas risked their lives to return to these cities was to organize the churches' leadership. They were not just following up on a loosely knit group; they were helping the believers get organized with spiritual leaders who could help them grow.

Churches grow under Spirit-led leaders, both laypersons and pastors. Pray for your church leaders and support them; and if God puts his finger on you, humbly accept the responsibility of a leadership role in your church.

Don't be intimidated by leaders.

Galatians 2:6

And the leaders of the church who were there had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.)

It's easy to rate people on the basis of their official status and to be intimidated by powerful people. But Paul was not intimidated by "those who seemed to be important" because all believers are equal in Christ.

We should show respect for our spiritual leaders, but our ultimate allegiance must be to Christ. We are to serve him with our whole being. God doesn't rate us according to our status; he looks at the attitude of our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7).

How to honor your church leaders

1 Thess. 5:12-13

Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong.

Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other.

Those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord” probably refers to elders and deacons in the church.

How can you show respect to and hold in the “highest regard” your pastor and other church leaders? Express your appreciation, tell them how you have been helped by their leadership and teaching, and thank them for their ministry in your life.

If you say nothing, how will they know where you stand? Remember, they need and deserve your support and love.

Don't put immature believers in positions of church leadership.

1 Tim. 3:6

An elder must not be a new Christian, because he might be proud of being chosen so soon, and the Devil will use that pride to make him fall.

Why Jesus' suffering made him the perfect leader.

Hebrews 2:10

And it was only right that God—who made everything and for whom everything was made—should bring his many children into glory. Through the suffering of Jesus, God made him a perfect leader, one fit to bring them into their salvation.

How was Jesus made perfect through suffering? Jesus' suffering made him a perfect leader, or pioneer, of our salvation (see the notes on +Hebrews 5:8 and +Hebrews 5:9).

Jesus did not need to suffer for his own salvation, because he was God in human form. His perfect obedience (which led him down the road of suffering) demonstrates that he was the complete sacrifice for us.

Through suffering, Jesus completed the work necessary for our own salvation. Our suffering can make us more sensitive servants of God.

People who have known pain are able to reach out with compassion to others who hurt. If you have suffered, ask God how your experience can be used to help others.

Leaders need your prayers.

Hebrews 13:18-19

Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do. I especially need your prayers right now so that I can come back to you soon.

The writer recognizes the need for prayer. Christian leaders are especially vulnerable to criticism from others, pride (if they succeed), depression (if they fail), and Satan's constant efforts to destroy their work for God. They desperately need our prayers! For whom should you regularly pray?

May God develop in you the ability for leadership by being full of his word.

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