

Biblically Inspired Leadership



“Doubt and Courage” (detail from *The Crossing of the Red Sea*)

By Rev. Dcn. Rosemarie Adcock

Introduction: The Need for the Leader

The examination of leadership within our current thematic perspective, *Illumination, Inspiration, and Information*, necessitates focus on the only authoritative source of knowledge, the perfect center of our inspiration, through which all our thoughts must pass, that is, God's Holy Word. The concept of leadership is so commonly accepted, that perhaps an analysis of biblically inspired leadership might first begin by defining if "leadership", as a concept, is actually biblical. Indeed, as author Andrew Clarke has noted, "leadership" is not a biblical term.¹ We do see it as an accepted necessity by our society, in spite of our democratized Western culture and post-modern individualism where one might argue that after all, we are not unreasoning sheep in need of shepherds, but sophisticated, reasoning man.

Widely accepted contemporary counseling also affirms man's quest for autonomy with the idea that man is basically good, therefore he is able to resolve his problems on his own by use of the resources within himself.² Of course, simple observation renders such reasoning wholly untrue. God's Word, declares, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9) One of the most chilling verses in Scripture concludes an abysmal look at the anarchy of ancient society, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Jgs 21:25), a clear display that the lack of leadership has devastating consequences.

Easily one must concede that at birth we were not mentally, emotionally, or socially mature, for even a prodigious toddler is immature in more than body. One might imagine God

¹ Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers*, First Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans Publ., 2000), 250.

² Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling and Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publ. 1975), 160-162.

could have created us mature at birth had He willed it so, but instead He appointed parents to have authority over their children and lead them to maturity.

Not only were we immature at our natural birth, we are not mature (perfectly sanctified) at our *rebirth*. Even the Apostle Paul describes himself as one in whom nothing good dwells, and goes on to describe his internal war with the flesh, calling it “the body of this death” (Rom 7:18-24). Paul calls the believers in Corinth immature babies:

“And I brethren could not speak to you as spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed even now you are not yet able...” (1 Cor 3:1-2).

Had we been perfected at salvation there would be no need for the admonishment to “be filled by the Holy Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Indeed the Scriptures acknowledge that we are not now perfect, but that, “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6). In the journey of progressive sanctification that begins at salvation and continues for the duration of our lives on this earth, God has appointed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11), overseers and deacons, to serve, to instruct, to teach, to admonish, to encourage, even rebuke (2 Tm 3:16-17) when appropriate. In the Old Testament age, God appointed prophets, priests, judges and kings for His people. Indeed without specifically naming the term, leadership is implicit, and the entire Scripture is filled with examples of it, both good and bad. We will examine leadership through 4 different literary genres found in Scripture: the normative genre of the pastoral epistles; the Old and New Testament narratives, the maxim principles found in such books as the Proverbs, and the imagery of metaphors to understand true leadership that will bear eternal fruit.

The Curse of Bad Leaders

The lack of leadership or the existence of bad leadership may be understood as God's judgment (Zec 11:15-17); a spiritual drought to accompany physical drought and famine:

“For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support, the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water; The mighty man and the warrior, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, the captain of fifty and the honorable man, the counselor and the expert artisan, and the skillful enchanter. And I will make mere lads their princes, and capricious children will rule over them, and the people will be oppressed, each one by another, and each one by his neighbor; the youth will storm against the elder and the inferior against the honorable” (Is 3:1-5).

The lack of leadership puts the flock (God's people) in danger: “They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered.” (Ezek. 34:5)

As Isaiah writes, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (53:6). Again, in other words, everyone is doing what is right in his own eyes. Jesus looked at the crowds with compassion because He saw the people as “sheep without a shepherd” (Mat 9:36, cf. Mark 6:34). The picture of a flock without shepherd leadership is one of a people totally lost and headed for destruction, afflicted (Zec10: 2), scattered (Ps 44:11), slaughtered (v. 22), as fools with death for a shepherd (Ps 49:14), in desperate need of God to seek *them* (Ps 119:176).

Saul was a spectacular failure in leadership, and his “selection was a divine judgment against Israel.”³ He was called with the words, “Has not the Lord anointed you ruler over His inheritance?” (1 Sm 10:1); but Saul treated God's inheritance as though it was *his*. He took authority not his and offered a burnt offering saying, “I forced myself”(13:1), never admitting guilt. The Proverbs say, “Pride goes before destruction” (16:18). Peter says, “Clothe yourselves

³ Bergen, R.D. (2001, c1996). *Vol.7: 1, 2 Samuel* (electronic ed.) Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (129). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pt 5:5). Because Saul didn’t obey God, God soon opposed him (1 Sm 15:11); but even that didn’t stop him. He tried to kill his own son (20:33). His envy of David drove him to a murderous rage and he killed 85 priests (22:18) because one of them gave David some bread (21:3-6). He knew that God had chosen David; it didn’t matter. He took authority over everything to meet his selfish needs, even over death by calling up Samuel who told Saul that the next day he would be dead (28:19); because God desired to put Saul to death (1 Chr 10:13-14). God has harsh words for the shepherds who abuse his flock:

“Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock...Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them...Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ‘Thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them’” (Ez 34:2,4, 9-10).

God calls bad leaders *blind* (Zec 11:17); Jesus cried, “Woe to you” to the religious leaders of His day (Mt 23:1-36) calling them blind (vs. 16,17,19, 24), serpents, brood of vipers (v. 33).

God spoke similar words through Jeremiah, but also gave a promise there would be a new day when He would raise up *true* leaders:

“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture...You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,’ declares the Lord. ‘I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,’ declares the Lord” (Jer 23:1-2, 4).

The Image of the True Leader

Author Oswald Sanders writes, “A true leader influences others spiritually only because the Spirit works in and through him to a greater degree than in those He leads.”⁴ When we observe the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer, the fruits of this indwelling are described for us as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). The “evident” deeds of the flesh are also indicated for us in an earlier passage as “immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, and carousing”, and that “those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”(5: 19-21). Paul speaks again of not being deceived by a “salvation” that hasn’t changed us. After a litany of repugnant life-dominating sins, he writes: “And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified. But you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Because of God’s miraculous work at our salvation, there is no concession that this new identity should be evident in leaders alone; it is expected in every believer who names Jesus as His Lord. Scripture admonishes us to lay aside or “put off” what we once were, and “put on” (Col 3:5-10) the new self, seemingly as easily as a garment. We are told not to lie but to speak truth; to be angry, yet not sin; not to steal, but to labor; to speak only that which edifies; to put away bitterness, anger, clamor, slander, and wrath, and replace these with kindness and forgiveness as Christ modeled for us (Eph 4:25-32). These commands imply the believer’s *ability* to obey them, since we were *formerly* darkness but *now* we are children of light (Eph 5:8).

⁴ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 28.

The Scripture declares, “The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom.”⁵ One who aspires to lead God’s people from that first step to become people of noble character is held to even *higher standards* than the people he leads. Such leaders are admonished by James, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (3:1). Leadership on God’s behalf is a fearful responsibility; those called by Him in Scripture responded in ways that showed their recognition of His holiness as well as the weight of that responsibility.

The Qualifications and Competency of the True Leader

As God’s leader, one need not search for a new set of management principles to establish one’s competency or qualification for the leadership task; nor do we assert our authority by creating new rules of practice, since the canon of Scripture and apostolic ministry are complete. There is no place for an authoritarian. However, we do need God’s inspired Word (2 Tm 3:16), which promises we will be fully equipped for everything (2 Pt 1:3), and under God’s authority we find all we need to lead well.

“The Bible is a covenant document divinely revealed and deposited with the Church by the Sovereign Himself. In it are the principles of management that the Sovereign has imposed upon His subjects. The authority of leadership, individually and corporately, everywhere is conditioned by this constitution, by which also their exercise of Christ’s authority is enjoined and delimited. The task of the leadership within the Church, therefore, is to declare, to minister, and to administrate. There is no power to legislate.”⁶

The desire to lead on God’s behalf is praised in Scripture. “If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do” (1 Tm 3:1); but aspiration does not necessarily mean qualification. The qualifications for leaders listed in Scripture surprisingly refer little to what one knows. Although leaders are admonished to handle accurately the word of

⁵ This admonition is found in several verses: Proverbs 1:7, 9:10; and Psalm 111:10.

⁶ (Adams, 1975), 330.

truth (2 Tm 2:15), there is far more written that has to do with the *personal integrity* of the leaders of God's people, that they be *faithful* men (v. 2), who are able to teach others.

Today, one is considered qualified, his pastoral merit affirmed, if after holding a Master of Divinity or Doctoral degree he accurately answers the questions of a board of peers.

Dr. Harvie Conn, a former Westminster professor, quotes from a lecture he attended:

“These magic bags of merit are systematically dealt out only to a relatively few players in the game. The dealers are the theological seminaries. Once a magic bag of merit is in one's possession, it can be traded for honor and prestige (plus a salary) at the friendly local church, and thus one maintains oneself, career and salary, more in terms of what one knows than what one is.”⁷

This problem might explain in part why tyrannical leadership is even named in the Church; but as we examined earlier, bad shepherds are not new to God's people. We are to walk in a manner *worthy* of our calling, displaying humility, gentleness, patience, showing forbearance in love, preserving unity, and peace (Eph 4:1).

The qualifications for a leader, other than not being a new convert (1 Tm. 3:6), have little to do with age, as Paul wrote to Timothy, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an *example* to those who believe” (4:12). The Apostle Peter also exhorted shepherds to be *examples*, and eager ones at that, who did not oppress the flock, and certainly not for “sordid gain” (1 Peter 5:1-4). Paul explained clearly to both Timothy and Titus what the qualifications for God's leaders are:

“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good

⁷ Ted Ward, “Servants, Leaders and Tyrants,” (lecture, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, March 29, 1978), quoted in Harvey Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publ., 1982), 93.

reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households” (1 Tim 3:2-12 cf. Titus 1:6-9).

The Call and Work of the Leader: Ambassadors and Teachers

The Apostle Paul describes us as being chosen from the foundation of the world, predestined according to His purpose (Eph 1:4-11). He says to Timothy, “(God) has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity” (2 Tm 1:9). The knowledge that this calling is prepared even before our birth, “the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them” (Ps 139:16), is profound, and gives us a glimpse of our own part in the meta-narrative of God.

When Paul describes us as no longer living for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf (2 Cor 5:15), he speaks of us as *new creatures* (v. 17), immediately redefining our roles as *ambassadors* (v. 20) of God, being reconciled, and reconciling others to Him. This ambassadorial role casts an early light on the definition of biblical leadership and the role of a biblically-inspired leader: it is as a representative *of* God to creatures made *by* God for God’s purposes and glory alone. The leaders called by God in Scripture were awestruck, and more than once were recorded as falling on their faces as dead men. The ambassadorial role of biblical leadership is clearly not well represented by the example of accepting a job, nor are leadership principles well served by examining secular material on the topic.

A leader in an ambassadorial role functions as a spokesperson who does not speak by his own will, but by God’s will. The word “ambassador” is defined as “a diplomatic official of the

highest rank appointed and accredited as representative in residence by one government or sovereign to another, usually for a specific length of time.”⁸ The OT prophets were spokespersons for God who introduced their prophecies as the words of God Himself with statements such as, “This is what the sovereign Lord says”, or “Thus says the Lord” when they spoke. When God called them, they were reluctant and consumed with their lack of worth in the presence of His holiness.

God’s call came to Isaiah the prophet in 740 BC⁹, “the year of King Uzziah’s death,” (Is 6:1) the end of a reign extending for 52 years¹⁰. Isaiah described a terrifying scene of seraphim declaring God’s holiness, foundations trembling and a temple filling with smoke as he saw the exalted Lord seated on a throne; a throne higher than the one just left vacant by the dead king. Isaiah’s response was not casual. He exclaimed: “Woe is me! For I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts”(v. 5). After Isaiah was touched by a seraph with a burning coal and his sins were forgiven, he was given instructions with a declaration that ultimately his mission would fail. His “success” resulted in judgment on God’s people who kept listening but refused to hear and failed to repent:

“Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.” (v. 9)

⁸ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*, s.v. “Ambassador,” <http://dictionary1.classic.reference.com/browse/ambassador> (accessed: May 06, 2009).

⁹ Geoffrey Grogan, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 6 Isaiah* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan Publ., 1986), 53-58.

¹⁰ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publ., 1988), 960.

When God called the reluctant prophet Jeremiah, He declared that Jeremiah was chosen before birth, and that he would speak God's words. Like Isaiah's ministry, the people didn't listen, and Jeremiah's "success" was in declaring their doom:

"Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations...everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak...' Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth'" (Jer 1:4-9).

When Ezekiel was called, the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God and fell on his face when he heard God speaking (Ez 1: 1-28). He was another prophet who was sent with a mission doomed to failure. God's leader may find himself calling people to repent who will not repent. This gives no cause to reduce the content of God's message to fit the desires of the hearers. Ezekiel was called to be faithful regardless of the outcome:

"Then He said to me, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me...And I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children; and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God'...And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words...for they are a rebellious house...But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; yet the house of Israel will not listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me" (Ez 2:3-8; 3:7).

Not all of the prophets were without success in convincing people to repent. The prophet Jonah was compelled to go to Nineveh only because a great fish swallowed him (Jon 1:17) and vomited him up on the shores of his destination (2:10). He didn't admonish the people to change their ways, but only said, "Yet 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown" (3:4). He functioned more as a town crier than as an ambassador, but the people believed in God and repented (v. 5), making Jonah furious because he knew God would forgive them (4:1-2).

These examples are not exhaustive. Jesus was the perfect example of an ambassador for God, who affirmed Jesus' authority as His spokesperson at the Transfiguration: "While (Peter)

was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!’” (Mat 17:5). The Apostle John records twice that Jesus said He spoke only what His Father told Him:

“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak” (Jn 12:49).
“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works” (Jn 14:10).

Similarly, John says of the Holy Spirit, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak..." (Jn 16:13). John also records Jesus' words about Satan who speaks, not from God, but lies "from his own nature" (Jn 8:44).

Teachers of God's word are admonished by Paul to "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim 4:2). We might say when it's popular or when it isn't, because "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (v. 3). Every Sunday morning pulpits are filled with ambassadors who are called to represent God, "handling accurately the word of truth" (2:15), resisting the temptation to preach what is popular instead of what is true. They are called to be God's spokespersons, ambassadors who speak only for God.

An ambassador of God speaks God's words often at a great sacrifice to himself, certainly to his popularity. Tradition holds that Isaiah was martyred under the reign of Manasseh, being cut in two by a wooden saw.¹¹ Paul was literally "an ambassador in chains" (Eph 6:20). Jesus

¹¹ Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Volume 2* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publ., 1982), 885-886.

said, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world...the world hates you"(Jn 15:19); and also "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them..."(Jn 17:14). John tells us, "Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. A friend of the world is an enemy to God" (Jn 3:13); and James also says, "Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (Jas 4:4). God's faithful leader may very well be hated and rejected by people in the world.

Even so, by no means is God's ambassador to be hated for any wrongdoing. The Apostle Peter wrote, "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler"(1 Pt 4:15); but if we do suffer Peter instructs, "For it is better if God should will it so that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong" (1 Pt 3:17). To the degree that one represents the mission of the Lord to go into all the world and make disciples, teaching them to obey God (Mt 28:19-20), while considering the Word of God our sole authority for faith and conduct, we can expect to be considered strangers and aliens in a foreign land (1 Pt 2:11); privileged ambassadors, not yet home (Eph 2:19).

The Call and Work of the Leader: Fathers and Shepherds

Fathers are called to *lead* their families and *provide* for them, lest they be considered worse than an unbeliever (1 Tm 5:8). A husband is called to lead and love his wife as Christ loved the Church, *sacrificially*, laying down his life for her (Eph 5:25); and love his own wife as his own body (v. 28). Who is not quick to eat when hungry, or so attentive to any bodily discomfort that nothing else matters until the discomfort is made right? So is a husband admonished to love his wife. He is to live with her in an understanding way, granting her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, or God won't even hear his prayers (1 Pt 3:7).

A father is called to *shepherd* and *guide* his children, not exasperate them (wield arbitrary authority) (Col 3:21), or “provoke (them) to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). The Book of Proverbs is filled with precepts from a father for his sons to heed instruction, to teach diligence, to seek wisdom like silver, to flee immorality, to avoid bad company, to find an excellent wife (31), to trust God. Paul used the image of “father” calling Timothy “my son” (2 Tm 2:2), and the Galatians, his children with whom he was in labor (4:19). The Apostle John often addressed the church as “my little children” (1 Jn). God’s leaders are to exhibit the concern of a father to provide, protect, guide and teach those in their care.

Throughout the Scriptures we also see references to the Shepherds of God’s flock, the leaders called to be representatives for Him to lead, to provide, to give rest, to guide, to protect, to comfort (Ps 23). The primary point to be grasped in this metaphorical imagery is that God Himself is the Shepherd. Isaiah calls God a Shepherd who tenderly leads His flock and carries the lambs (Ps 40:11). David implores God to be a Shepherd and carry His people (Ps 28:9), as Micah did when He called God to shepherd His people with His scepter (Mi 7:14). Asaph calls on God in His heaven to rescue His sheep, “Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth!” (Ps 80:1); and proclaims, “But He led forth His own people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock” (Ps 78:52). Asaph again identifies God’s sheep as “the sheep of Your pasture” (Ps 74:1); we are called “the sheep of His hand” (Ps 95:7) and that “We Your people and the sheep of Your pasture will give thanks to You forever; to all generations we will tell of Your praise” (Ps 79:13).

God Himself claims possession over His sheep. Though He chooses leaders to shepherd His flock, He pronounces that the flock is *His*. This point cannot be overstated in the study of biblical leadership. The accountability of the shepherd leader is to God, because the possession is

God's. Jeremiah proclaimed, "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding" (Jer 3:15). This prophecy was perfectly shown in God's Son, the Perfect Shepherd whom the writer of Hebrews calls "the Great Shepherd of the Sheep" (13:20). Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (Jn 10:27). So much is contained in that statement alone: His sheep are among those who have ears to hear (Mk 4:9, 23; 7:16), who listen to the Shepherd, and obey His voice, thus they are not of those who practice lawlessness who are not known by Him (Mt 7:23). That they follow Him suggests submission and obedience to Him, to His teaching and direction. That they are known by Him implies His care for them. Those who do not believe are not of His sheep (John 10:26). If we lead for Him we must also be one of the sheep who follow Him, or we are disqualified.

After the Resurrection, one could expect endless instructions for the disciples, but while restoring Peter, Jesus said only this: "Tend my lambs" (Jn 21:15), "shepherd my sheep" (v. 16) and "tend my sheep"(v.17). Instructions for the leaders of God's people are contained in that simple imagery. The perfect model for shepherding the flock of God our Father is seen in the sacrificial life of His Son who called Himself the Good Shepherd:

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I lay down My life for the sheep."(John 10:11-13, 15)

Though Jesus was *sent* by God to shepherd His people, others were *called* by God as His shepherds. God called Abraham to go from his father's house to a land He would show him, with the promise that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gn 12:1-3) and to his

descendants God would give the Promised Land (v. 7; 13:14-17). Abraham believed God and was made righteous by his faith and called the friend of God. (Gn 15:6; Jas 2:23)

God called Moses out of a desert exile after he murdered an Egyptian. While he was pasturing the flock of his father-in-law, Moses saw a blazing fire from the midst of a bush that somehow wasn't consumed. When he went to take a closer look, God called him from the midst of the bush and began His relationship with Moses by declaring His holiness, an attribute of God all leaders must recognize before God can use them. "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Ex 3:5) God declared His *purpose* for Moses when He said He had seen the affliction of His people in their slavery (v.7) and would bring them into a good and spacious land, flowing with milk and honey (v. 8). By faith, Moses led them through the Red Sea that parted for them. More than once he fell on His face prostrate before God who wanted to destroy the people and start over. When Moses sent spies into the new land and only 2 believed God, he turned back and shepherded God's rebellious, faithless people through a desert wasteland for 40 years until the last of that generation died. He led with *purpose* from *community*, from the *midst* of them, *identifying* with them, "choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin (Heb 11:25). God's call always *involves a purpose*, as it did here. Though at first Moses objected, God never relented from calling him to further the fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham (Gn 15:18). Our service may fulfill a purpose established long before our call.

Another noteworthy attribute of Moses' shepherding was that he *shared the leadership* responsibility as Jesus would with His disciples, by appointing others to assist in caring for the flock, judging only the most difficult cases himself. We are instructed by Paul to *equip the saints* for the work of service (Eph 4:11-12), because each member of the Body of Christ is given gifts,

not just the one who leads; to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Cor 12:7): administration; words of wisdom, knowledge (v.8), faith, gifts of healings (v.9), miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues and interpretations (v.10), teaching, serving, exhortation, giving and mercy (Rom 12:4-8). Although Moses *delegated*, he did not *abdicate* his responsibility, but instead, equipped Joshua who would succeed him.

Moses was called God's *servant* (Jo 1:2). David was called God's *servant* (1 Chr 17:7). Paul tells us "through love, to *serve* one another" (Gal 5:13). Jesus said "For even the Son of Man did not come to *be served*, but to *serve* and give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). In instructing His disciples He said, "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all" (vs. 43-44). After washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus said, "For I gave you an example, that you also should do as I did to you" (Jn 13:15). Dr. Harvie Conn summarizes:

"In this 'spiritual life' there are new weapons for changing the world. The War Lord of the universe did not enter Jerusalem on a charger but on a donkey (Zech 9:9). And He gives to His people for rule, not a scepter, but a towel (John 13:12-15)."¹²

God first commissioned Joshua while Moses was still alive (Dt 31:14-23), but much like Isaiah, a deeper awareness of God's rule was declared to him as he faced his first battle:

"Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?' He said, 'No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord...Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.'" (Jo 5:13-15).

Saul, who became the Apostle Paul, was "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1) when God called him. While on a road to Damascus, "suddenly

¹² Harvey Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publ., 1982), 69.

a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me...I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’ (vs. 3-5). He was left blind and was led by the hand to Damascus. God changed a zealous murderer who was a *theologically* competent Pharisee taught under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3); but Paul was not qualified to *shepherd* the people of God until he considered them his children. Paul likens his transformation to the imagery of Moses: “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). Our theological competence cannot supersede our care for God’s people.

The Call and Work of the Leader: The Unlikely

Most of those called in the Scriptures are the unlikely, the unwilling, or the obscure. Paul was so unlikely, that the followers of Christ were afraid of him (Acts 9:13-15). God may choose those who *appear* unqualified, however, unwillingness and incompetence are not qualifiers.

“For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are” (1 Cor 1:26-28).

In ancient societies women were unlikely leaders, yet God called some women into strategic positions to protect His people. Esther was called out of obscurity, an orphan who became queen, but appointed for a *particular time* to accomplish a *particular task* and saved her people from destruction. Deborah was a prophetess and a judge (Jgs 4:4) who was asked by Barak to go into a battle that resulted in peace for the next 40 years (5:31). Priscilla is mentioned even before her husband as one who corrected the eloquent teaching of Apollos (Acts 18:24-26).

Gideon was a timid, unlikely leader, but God called him also for a particular task, to free His people from the Midianite oppression (Jgs 6:6). An angel appeared to him calling him “valiant warrior”(v. 12), and told him to “go in this your strength” (v. 14) before he had any strength. Gideon went into battle only after God eliminated all but 300 men (7:6) so it would be impossible that anyone but God could take the credit for the victory.

David was anointed by Samuel to be the king who would replace Saul. When Samuel came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse his father, David was left in the fields where he was tending the sheep. Samuel seemed impressed by David’s brother Eliab (1 Sm 16:6); but after the disastrous choice of Saul who was so praised for his stature, God said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as a man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart” (v. 7). God rejected each of 7 brothers until finally David was called in. “And the Lord said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for this is he.’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward” (vs. 12,13).

A leader must learn to *see as God sees*, and have God’s *discernment* when selecting people to serve with him. He also must develop the ability to see a challenge from God’s *perspective*. When David heard of the threats made by Goliath, he saw the problem clearly, and courageously put the battle in its proper perspective when he said, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?”(1 Sm 17:26). Although David was the only one to recognize that it was God who was being challenged, he was ridiculed by his brothers who asked, “With whom have you left those *few sheep* in the wilderness?” (v. 28). A

leader may receive ridicule from others even though God Himself calls him, yet this cannot deter him from the assignment.

God made a covenant with David saying, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader over My people Israel” (2 Sm 7:8), and Jesus the Messiah, the Son of David, came through his lineage. As a leader, he waited on God’s *direction* and God’s *timing* before he took over the kingdom. He was an excellent example in that he didn’t take *revenge* (Romans 12:19) against his predecessor Saul, though twice he was given opportunity. (1 Sm 24; 26). He asked for *specific direction* in strategizing his battles (5:23-24). He spent *time communing with God* as is evident in the many Psalms he wrote. He *built a community* of men who were devoted to him and fought with him. For the most part he was *humble* in God’s sight, and was *not ashamed to worship* God with his whole heart (2 Sm 6:14). When Nathan the prophet rebuked him for his sin with Bathsheba, he repented, and wrote in Psalm 51, “Against Thee, Thee only I have sinned and done what was evil in Thy sight” (v. 4); crying out “Create in me a clean heart O God” (v. 10).

Conclusion: The Reward of God’s Leaders

As we have seen, a leader may endure trials and suffering as an ambassadorial representative of God; requiring God’s discernment and perspective, and that he sees as God sees with the courage to believe Him regardless of circumstance; called for a particular purpose at a particular time; communing in humble intimacy with God; seeking specific direction; emulating Christ’s shepherd leadership of provision, protection, guidance and service; be faithful, share his leadership and equip the saints; be in community; and be an example to the flock, with a willingness to live a selfless, sacrificial life. We are invited to suffer hardship (2 Tm 2:3), to endure hardship (4:5), preparing us for ministry (2 Cor 1:14); giving proof of our faith, and

resulting in praise, glory and honor at the revelation of Christ (1 Pt 1:7). Paul longed to know Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings to also know the power of His resurrection (Phil 4:10), indicating our suffering is not without reward.

Daniel writes, “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (Dan12: 3). We are admonished to “not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised” (Heb10: 35-36); the unfading crown of glory at the appearance of our long awaited Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

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