

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL LEADER

TEXT: 1 Kings 12

INTRODUCTION: Many of us here tonight are in some type of leadership role sometime and in some way. You may be a leader

your peers at work

your Lifechange Group

another church group

a ministry team

your class, a club, or a group at school

your home owner's association

a group of cub scouts

your children in home schooling or some other project

Each of us may also be followers in many settings, but most of us have or will have at least one setting where we are the leader or one of the leaders.

Would you like to know what God says about how to be a successful leader?

1 Kings 12 tells us a lot about the leadership skills of a man named Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, as he took over the leadership of the nation of Israel from his father. Now admittedly, his example is mostly a negative one, yet we can learn much about positive leadership qualities from this portion of the Word of God.

I. A SUCCESSFUL LEADER CHOOSES THE RIGHT ADVISORS.

Proverbs 1:5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,

A. Rehoboam had wise counselors available

1. these men trained at the feet of his father, the wisest man on earth;
2. but he rejected their counsel because it was not what he wanted to hear

B. What makes for a wise advisor?

1. **a person who walks with God**
2. **a person who knows God's Word**

3. **a person who will tell you the truth, even when it is not what you want to hear** (does not mean they are abrasive or unpleasant; but they are honest).
4. **when possible, a person who has dealt successfully with challenges similar to your own**

II. A SUCCESSFUL LEADER SERVES THOSE HE LEADS.

A. Jesus set the supreme example for us here.

Mark 10:42-45 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

⁴³ "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.

⁴⁵ "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

TRUE SERVANTS DON'T KEEP SCORE

Dale Galloway tells the following story: "Little Chad was a shy, quiet young fellow. One day he came home and told his mother he'd like to make a valentine for everyone in his class. Her heart sank. She thought, 'I wish he wouldn't do that!' because she had watched the children when they walked home from school. Her Chad was always behind them. They laughed and hung on to each other and talked to each other, but Chad was never included. Nevertheless, she decided she would go along with her son. So she purchased the paper and glue and crayons. For three whole weeks, night after night, Chad painstakingly made 35 valentines. "Valentine's Day dawned, and Chad was beside himself with excitement! He carefully stacked them up, put them in a bag, and bolted out the door. His mom decided to bake him his favorite cookies and serve them up warm with a cold glass of milk when he came home from school. She just knew he would be disappointed...maybe that would ease the pain a little. It hurt her to think that he wouldn't get many valentines--maybe none at all. "That afternoon she had the cookies and milk on the table. When she heard the children outside, she looked out the window. Sure enough, here they came, laughing and having the best time. And, as always, there was Chad in the rear. He walked a little faster than usual. She fully expected him to burst into tears as soon as he got inside. His arms were empty, she noticed, and when the door opened she choked back her own tears. 'Mommy has some warm cookies and milk for you.' "But he hardly heard her words. He just marched right on by, his face aglow, and all he could say was, 'Not a one...not a one.' "Her heart sank, but then he added, 'I didn't forget a one, not a single one!'" [Improving Your Serve by Charles Swindoll, Word, 1981. Pages 92-93.]

III. A SUCCESSFUL LEADER COMMUNICATES WITH THOSE HE LEADS.

The elders told Rehoboam to "answer the people" and "speak good words to them."

We cannot lead a group we do not know and understand.

We must have a willingness to hear, listen, and respond.

I have observed that many times we entrench our problems by refusing to talk about them. We mock the ostrich with head in sand because we know that a failure to see does not make the danger go away. But then we turn around and do the same thing on a verbal level. We think that silence about a problem means the problem has gone away. Usually this is not true.

IV. A SUCCESSFUL LEADER SPEAKS KINDLY TO ALL.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

A. This does not mean that a leader should always say what the group wants to hear.

B. It just means that whatever he has to say, it needs to be said with kindness.

Perhaps if Rehoboam had come back and said, "I understand the burden you have been laboring under, and I wish I could lighten the load. But right now things are such that I just cannot do what you request." Perhaps the ten northern tribes would have rebelled anyway. But when Rehoboam said, "my father beat you with whips but I will use scorpions!" the rebellion was guaranteed.

Parents, and especially fathers, we are given a special warning concerning the application of this principle in the leadership of our homes.

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

One of the ways we can provoke to wrath is by not carrying out our training and discipline in kindness. We can be firm without being harsh. We can chasten without meanness.

Whoever you are leading, be kind to all.

V. A SUCCESSFUL LEADER OBEYS THE WORD OF THE LORD.

A. This is the one thing Rehoboam did right. After he blew it on the other four, the ten northern tribes rebelled. Rehoboam was going to take his army and go to war with them and try to retake them in a kind of ancient war between the states. But God sent his prophet to say to him,

Thus says the Lord, "Do not go up and fight against your brothers..."

Rehoboam obeyed, and he at least got to continue his reign as king over his own native Judah and the little tribe of Benjamin.

I mentioned at the beginning that all leaders are followers also some of the time. One of the places we must follow if we are going to be successful when we lead is to be faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must trust Him; we must walk with Him; we must obey Him. When leaders do not, they put themselves and those they lead in serious jeopardy.

CONCLUSION:

Some years ago, while driving to Houston, Texas, I saw a most unusual site around Beaumont. The sky was darkened from horizon to horizon, like a wide corridor of smoke was blowing across the face of the countryside. The closer I approached, the more intrigued I became because it became obvious that what I was seeing was not smoke nor a cloud.

It was geese! Thousands and thousands of geese. The wide flight path stretched for miles with geese moving by as if attached to an invisible heavenly conveyer belt. And each goose was a part of a flight, a "V" shaped formation, and each flight had a leader. It is amazing how God builds into these amazing creatures who are dependent on navigating in a group certain qualities of leadership. For instance

They pick the right advisors, namely their parents to model and teach them many of their necessary skills.

The lead goose is the model of servanthood. Far from being the most exalted goose, he is the one doing most of the work for the others. The other geese in the flight only have to expend about 1/3 of the effort of the lead goose because they are able to ride in his air wake in the V formation.

And there is communication in the flight. Though they be so high you can scarcely see them, you can hear the incessant honking, one to another.

And animal specialists tell us the communication is kind. In flight they honk to encourage the leader and each other as they journey onward.

And finally, what are they doing but obeying the law of the Lord He has built into their heart by instinct. From time to time a goose will not obey this built in instinct and get left behind by the others. If this happens, it means certain hardship for the loner and most probably death. Their life as they fly overhead is a testimony to obeying the word of the Lord in their heart.

I wonder if this very week you would work with the Lord and let the Lord work in you to further develop those qualities of leadership in your life that would make you a successful leader?