

SOUTHWESTERN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD UNIVERSITY

**Biblical Servant Leadership
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Instructor: Dr. Jimmy White

Leadership Observation Principles Paper

STUDENT DATA:

Kathleen Smith

kathleenjsmith@lionmail.sagu.edu

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Moses

Exodus 3:7-10

Observation:

While Moses was tending the flocks of Jethro on the mountain, Horeb, he saw a flaming bush that did not burn up. From the bush came the voice of God calling unto Moses to come close and listen. This moment in Moses's life became definitive of his calling as the Lord ignited an awareness and passion within him. In verses 7-10, God reveals his concern for the condition of his people in Egypt and his plan to rescue them and bring them to the Promised Land. In this moment, God confirmed Moses' calling and sent Moses to rescue his people. Although Moses questions this call in the moment, his vision and passion for his life was birthed on Mount Horeb through his encounter at the burning bush.

Principle:

An effective leader has a burden in their heart discovered through time in the presence of God that compels them to action. This can also be called vision. Established vision and passion for a leader's life is imperative. Vision gives purpose to the actions the leader takes and sets them on a trajectory toward accomplishing a God-given destiny.

Exodus 3:11

Observation:

Upon receiving his divine calling and commission to set God's people free from their Egyptian bondage, Moses doubts his own abilities to be the one whom God called to fulfill this mission. He doubts God's choice through questions and statements that reveal his feelings of fear, insecurity, and inadequacy in accomplishing what God has just asked him to do. He is reluctant to take the action needed to fulfill his call and lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. However, as this passage goes on, it is revealed that God does not see the inabilities in Moses to complete this task. He continuously affirms Moses saying that he will be with him in every step of the journey. He assures him with answers and tactics to fulfill the call on his life. God did not worry about Moses' human deficiencies for the call, because he knew that he equips those he calls. Moses' feelings were completely normal, but human feelings do not change God's call.

Principle:

Leadership is not based on human abilities, motives, nor desires. God-ordained leadership has nothing to do with how we see ourselves or a situation, but it has everything to do with what God wants to do through us even so. Although leaders may experience feelings of fear or reluctance, they must remember that where God calls he provides and guides. He will lead them to success and fulfillment of his vision for their lives, when their focus is on him working through them.

Exodus 18:13-27

Observation:

After God had delivered the Israelites from Egypt, Moses had to lead them through the wilderness before arriving to the Promised Land. While camped in the wilderness, near the mountain of God, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to the camp to see Moses. Moses and Jethro praised God as Moses told of all that God had done to save them from the Egyptians and bring them to the current point. However, Jethro noticed Moses' control over every detail that was happening in the camp. Moses was trying to mediate disputes and lead through even the smallest details for the millions of Israelites following him. Jethro spoke corrective wisdom into his life by informing him of his wrongdoing. He advised that Moses delegate the responsibilities and free himself up to create longevity and health in his leadership.

Principle:

Effective leaders know the art of delegation. Leaders should not hold every detail tightly under his or her control. They should delegate then release minor issues and details to qualified individuals who serve under them. If they do not, they run the risk of burnout or neglect of other important life matters (i.e. family, health, credibility, etc.).

David

1 Samuel 16:13

Observation:

The prophet Samuel had been commissioned to anoint the next king following Saul's rejection by God for his disobedience. God sent Samuel to the house of Jesse to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the next king. After determining that none of the older sons were to be the next king, Jesse was instructed to send for his youngest son who was tending to the flocks in the field. Upon this son's arrival to the house, the Lord instructed Samuel that this son, David, would be the next king. Samuel anointed him in front of his family, then left. Life went on as it had before, and they all kept these things within their heart. God's choice for the next king was not determined by man's expectations, as David was the last choice in the family, nor is God's anointing always at the time one steps into a position of influence or authority. David had to go through seasons of development and service in order to be prepared for his reign as king.

Principle:

A leader's timing for influence is determined by God alone. An anointing or calling may come long before a door of influence and credibility is opened. A leader must learn to wait on the Lord and develop himself/herself to be better prepared for the day they see the fulfillment of the anointing.

1 Samuel 17:39-40

Observation:

Jesse sent David to give his brothers food on the battlefield and to see how they were doing. When David arrived, he encountered the cause of the Israelites standstill in battle. Each day, a Philistine giant, named Goliath, would stand out from the lines shouting defiance toward the army of Israel. None of the Israelites would face the giant. David was appalled that this man could stand against the Lord's people in such a way and took the vow to stand against Goliath himself. As Saul agreed to allow him to go into battle, he tried to dress him in his own armor and defenses. However, this is not the talent and strength in which God had given to David. David declined someone else's strength and means to lead the army to take up what he was used to and good at.

Principle:

Leaders must know their strengths and use them strategically to advance God's work. Every person is equipped with unique God-given gifts, talents, and passions, and these are where a leader must lead from. What a leader is most used to and good at will best equip them for their journeys and battles ahead. Even when others try to offer their way of doing things, a leader must know when to decline and operate in their own abilities.

1 Samuel 19:9-10

Observation:

Following David's defeat of the giant, Goliath, Saul became very jealous and fearful of David. He knew David was favored and feared he would take the throne, so he plotted to kill David. This scripture only references one of many of Saul's attempts or plans to kill David for the remainder of his life. In this passage, while David was playing the lyre for Saul, an evil spirit came upon Saul and he attempted to pin David to the wall with a spear. David was able to escape this situation. However, David spent the rest of Saul's life running from Saul and his plots to kill him. Time and time again, David had the chance to either reveal the bad character of his leader, fight back, or to kill him, but David had the integrity to uphold his own character and that of his leadership every time. Even when pressured by those around him (1 Samuel 24), David did not kill Saul for he knew the promises of God on his life and that holding to his integrity as a leader was of more importance than revenge or even self-defense. He patiently and respectfully upheld Saul even unto Saul's death (2 Samuel 1).

Principle:

Leaders must root themselves in integrity and honor. There will always be people, whether above, laterally, or below, that will make cutting comments, come against one's leadership, or attempt to remove one's influence. However, integrity and honor must be what the leader operates in instead of their natural instincts to defend themselves. Upholding one's own character and the character of one's leadership is of utmost importance.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 2:11-12

Observation:

Nehemiah had received a vision from God and held it in his heart until the right time. He knew the vision was for God and Jerusalem and not his own gain as a leader. He also knew if the vision was prematurely announced, without proper plan and strategy casting, that he would receive little support. Whether it was his men doubting the ability to accomplish the task or them choosing to not participate in the vision, he could not afford to release the vision before its proper time. He knew the task was daunting but trusted that God had a plan to restore it, and his job as a leader was to release the information at the right time to the right people.

Principle:

Effective leadership requires strategic vision casting. If the vision is released in the wrong timing, people could reject it or the leader, downgrade it, try to change it, or leave the organization. A leader must recognize that he or she is responsible for receiving the vision and passionately casting it in God's timing, not their own.

Nehemiah 3

Observation:

Nehemiah knew rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem was too big of a task for him to complete on his own. In fact, it was quite the feat for any sized group of men. However, he empowered through vision casting and delegation each family or people group to take their part in repairing Jerusalem and protecting it from the outside armies and people. This was an organizational phenomenon as people were joining together for a common purpose and being utilized by gifts and abilities—some of the divisions were by craft, skill, towns, etc. He was able to oversee and organize more than having to do the work himself. He did not have to worry about how the task would be completed as he effectively delegated people to their own segment of the wall of Jerusalem. Even as the enemies doubted their efforts and opposed their work (Nehemiah 4, 6), Nehemiah encouraged and empowered the people all the more.

Principle:

Effective leadership requires efficient organization and delegation. Recognizing areas in which people, within the organization, can own for themselves and empowering them to do so is more productive than one leader attempting to accomplish every detail on his or her own.

Nehemiah 5:8-13

Observation:

Nehemiah discovered that some of the business and financial workings were being handled poorly and without proper ethic. He was angered by the way wrongdoers had been running Jerusalem, so he stepped back and strategically determined a way to resolve the conflict and wrongdoing. He addressed the people involved in the infractions, and he made plans that would bring healthy dealings for all of Jerusalem. He did this with such strategy and poise that all the people agreed and left praising God.

Principle:

Leaders must learn how to effectively resolve conflict within their organization. They first must work through issues within themselves, then begin to approach the parties involved in infractions or wrongdoing. A goal of the leader should be to quickly and strategically resolve issues that could lead to bigger issues within the organization.

Jesus

Matthew 18:4

Observation:

While in Capernaum, the disciples began arguing about who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. They understood that they had influence and they were close followers of Christ, but misunderstood what that would mean at the time that Jesus left them for heaven. They were looking at greatness through the world's perspective and elevating the world's ideas above Christ's teachings and example. In order to refute their thinking, Jesus brought a child to him and began to teach them about greatness in God's eyes. In verse 4, Jesus reminds the disciples that greatness is found in the one who takes the lowly, humble place. Greatness is not about the highest position or best opportunity for them. God is not impressed by their importance as a person, but he is impressed by their ability to humble themselves to lower positions and serve God no matter what that may look like for them.

Principle:

Leadership is not a battle to determine the greatest among ourselves. Leadership is taking the road of humility in every situation. Greatness in God's eyes is sincerely turning away from our own selves and putting his desires and purposes first.

Matthew 20:25-28

Observation:

As the disciples were desiring the authority and honor that comes with a title or position next to Christ in his kingdom, not only were they misunderstanding what the kingdom of heaven would look like, but also misunderstanding the principles of honor in God's kingdom. Jesus corrects them in this passage. He reminds them that those that do not

follow Christ lord their authority over others, and honor is their primary goal. They act out of selfishness and pride, and worldly leader seek their own gain. A desire to be noticed and praised is among the desires of those that seek leadership by worldly means. This is not reflective of the leadership in which Christ calls man to. Instead, he reveals to the disciples what their authority and honor should look like. Jesus flips the standard that the disciples have always known to reveal that true greatness, or leadership, is not about position or their own gain, but it is about servanthood and humbly lowering oneself for the sake of others. Jesus recognizes that His disciples will not all physically give their life in service of the world like He will, but Christ's desire is that they lead from the same heart and inspiration.

Principle:

True biblical leadership is not about the position or title one holds, but about the way one carries themselves in servanthood. Leaders should not lead solely through their own authority. That is not lasting nor godly. Leaders should lead from the authority God grants them as they serve and give themselves up for others.

Mark 6:7-13

Observation:

Up to this point, Jesus had been the one traveling from village to village preaching the Good News. He had the disciples with Him and taught them important lessons of life, conduct, and authority along the journeys. However, in this passage, there is an evident shift in Christ's plan for His disciples. He now was moving to allowing them to be extensions of himself and the mission God had sent him on. He called them to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:19) not just followers of Him. Although the following season was important for growth and learning, Jesus now releases them to their initial calling. In this passage, He gathers the disciples and begins to send them out two-by-two. When sending them out, he takes the time to inform them of their tasks, expectations, and authority. He delegates the Message, equips those He delegates, and releases them to do their task. He allows them to join his mission in proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Principle:

Effective leaders will know when they need to delegate a task, then trust those with that responsibility without micromanagement. Effective leadership is a recognition that one man/woman cannot do everything on their own. Leaders must learn to delegate authority to qualified individuals to expand their own abilities and influence.

Paul

Romans 12:8

Observation:

As Paul instructs the Romans of what a life of humble service should look like for every member of the body of Christ, he takes the time to specify an expectation for the leadership. No matter ones role in the church, they have a distinct purpose that should be stewarded well. He tells those that lead to lead with diligence. In this scripture, Paul is referencing leading with enthusiasm and earnestness. A leader's part in taking care of the church should be done out of this heart of diligence in order to best play their part in the larger purpose.

Principle:

Effective leaders demonstrate an earnest heart toward serving the Lord's mission for their life. Lazy leaders, or leaders that simply do enough to get by, do not lead with excellence. Leaders should seek out the enthusiasm to serve with diligence.

1 Thessalonians 2:6-12

Observation:

As Paul is greeting the church of Thessalonica, he takes the time to remind them of the heart behind his leadership. He lets them know he does not work for their approval nor money. Rather, he leads out of a heart of love and trust for their church and people. He illustrates his dealings with them as a parent deals with a child. He reveals his ministry is fulfilled best through a heart of love, encouragement, and comfort, spurring the Thessalonians on to the fullness of their life in Christ.

Principle:

Leaders should develop an inspiring love and trust for those they lead. Correction and growth is produced best from a purpose of love, encouragement, and comfort, spurring those that one leads on to their calling and life in Christ. Organization relationships and relational touches are paramount for an effective leader.

1 Timothy 4:12

Observation:

Timothy was young for his position of influence in the church of Ephesus in that time period. The people had been used to following Paul and were likely older than Timothy, as well. It is likely his leadership had been or would be called into question. They would assume his youth would mean a deficit in his character. However, Paul admonishes young Timothy to be an exemplary leader. He lists the areas in which could be called to question, revealing that if he could set the example in these areas he would not neglect the call on his life. Timothy was challenged to assume his authority of leadership by revealing his character as an exemplary leader versus the expected youthful character flaws that would not be inspiring or expected of a good leader.

Principle:

Effective leadership is exemplary leadership. Although no person is perfect, a leader should work to carry themselves in good conduct, speech, love, faith, and purity as to set the example for those they lead. If a leader cannot hold themselves to a certain standard, they cannot expect their followers to hold to the standard either.

Leadership Principles Summary

The Word of God is full of leaders who have demonstrated or taught on what to do and not to do as a biblical servant leader. The lives of Moses, David, Nehemiah, Jesus, and Paul have taught leaders significant principles to operate and live by. When studying each of these men, it remains apparent that they were leading as God intended for them to do. They were human and made mistakes, but they were able to learn from them and continue on after God's plan for themselves and those that they led.

These principles summarize to reveal the importance of key values in a leader's life. Humility, integrity, and servanthood are at the heart of all of these leaders. They consistently reveal the need for a vision and the strategic communication of it to those that they lead. Their visions were not something that they ever created for themselves or for their own gain. However, servant leadership is established through a vision for God's mission, discovered in his presence, and for the betterment of others. All of these leaders communicated their vision through their actions and delegation or inspired those wanting to lead with such motivations. They set the example in speech and conduct for those that they led, and this continues to inspire still today.

Personal Application

These biblical leaders have inspired me in my own leadership. Like Moses, I hope to have an awareness and receptivity to respond to God's moment of calling. It remains time in God's presence that refines and seals the things he wants to do in and through us, and for me, I know that his presence will need to be a continual place to resort and have God reveal his passion and heart for what I can make a difference with in my world. Upon receiving this vision, like Nehemiah, I know that I need to get better at holding this within. I have already been guilty of releasing pieces of God's plan and my passions prematurely and having to deal with significant doubt, discouragement, and attempts to quiet my passion. From now on, I must be aware of God's strategic timing in releasing his plans for me and those that I will influence.

The address of Jethro to Moses and the model of Nehemiah's leadership have inspired me to think more purposefully about delegation and empowerment of those I lead. I naturally am an "I can do it all myself" type of leader. This has been something that God has already worked on some. However, these biblical models are even greater inspiration for my future. I will determine the gifts of those I lead and empower them in those areas. It is like David recognizing his strength was not in the armor Saul tried to give him but in his own sling. For my life and leadership, I need to release people to work in their armor (strengths), and I will work in my own strength and loosely oversee their efforts.

For my own life, I plan to seek God for more humility and integrity. A leader will not truly be a servant without these two values being foundational. As David could humbly uphold Saul despite his attacks, I must uphold my leaders despite any disagreement or concerns. Conflicts must be strategically managed, as Nehemiah reveals, and for me, confrontation is an

area I need to seek humility to do correctly and with grace. I want to inspire others through my correction, instead of demeaning or discouraging them.

Overall, for my life, I need to allow God to operate in his timing. Like David's anointing coming at an early age, I have known pieces of my calling since I was 13 years old. These are things I am learning to ponder in my heart and allow God to work out in his timeline. All the while, I must submit to the process that he is taking me through to reach my God-given potential.