

Everyone should have someone in authority over them.

After one particularly tense meeting, I remarked to the person in authority over me, 'I don't envy your job.' He replied, 'It has been my experience that those who say that are the ones who do.' While I thought that some parts of his job were cool, I really did not envy his job.

His remark told me I had an insecure leader to follow. If you have ever worked for an insecure leader, you have stories to tell.

- Perhaps they take all the credit for success but share none of faults for failure.
- Perhaps they surround themselves with loyal people rather than competent people.
- Perhaps they can't laugh at themselves even though it is funny.
- Perhaps they are more concerned about titles and position than they are of actual output.

On another occasion, I tried to help my boss. I said 'You should address what you said yesterday. The team is just getting to know you and you really insulted them.' He blew up, 'I thought I could trust you.' I was shocked but managed to say, 'you can. I am here talking to you about this and not gossiping about it with my coworkers.'

The Bible has a lot to say about leadership.

- For example, Moses' leadership is even studied in some MBA programs.
- There is a natural process of men and women becoming leaders. Older leaders train younger leaders and then pass the baton of leadership when they move on or retire.

Tonight, we don't have time to exhaustively examine David's leadership, but we can zero in on how David came to sit on Israel's throne. There are many great takeaways for us about our relationship with those in authority over us.

David

Thrones, 2Sa 2-5

We are looking at the **life of David** and learning from his example.

- **Last Saturday night**, David and Saul both made poor decisions. David listened to own self-talk rather than trust God. He and his men have joined the Philistines to get relief from being hunted by Saul and his army; this was a poor decision.
- Saul decided to consult a witch. The message Saul received was God's last, 'you and Jonathan will die tomorrow.'

The story continues.

- David was not allowed to fight against Israel alongside the Philistines. They were sent home, but the Amalekites had kidnapped all their wives and families and burnt their town.
- So, David asks God for direction and God gives David permission to go after them. They get back everything the Amalekites stole. They send a portion to the elders in Judah.
- Meanwhile Saul and Jonathan are in a battle against the Philistines. Jonathan is killed and Saul is mortally wounded. Afraid of what the Philistines might do to him Saul falls on his own sword.
- But he did not die immediately and eventually had a lone Amalekite deliver a mercy blow. This unnamed man brings Saul's crown and armband to David. David has this man killed for 'you said, "I killed the Lord's anointed (2Sa 1:16 NIV)."'

Let's pick up the story.

1. Judah's Throne.

'After this, David asked the Lord, "Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?" "Yes," the Lord replied. Then David asked, "Which town should I go to?" "To Hebron," the Lord answered. ²David's two wives were Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel. So David and his wives ³and his men and their families all moved to Judah, and they settled in the villages near Hebron (2Sa 2:1-3 NLT).'

Notice that David inquires of God. Samuel has anointed him as king, and everyone knows he will be king. Nevertheless, he asks God what he should do.

Let's start a leadership list as we go through tonight's story.

Good leaders ...

- Submit to God's plan. The best leaders build a team that will help them with decisions, but the most important voice to listen for is God's voice.

- Listen to others. Most of you probably think my position requires a lot of talking and public speaking. Yes, but listening is more important.

Leadership is not a position, it is influence. If a leader relies on title or position, then they have lost influence. **I could say to a two-year-old, 'I'm your mother, do as I say.'** But it doesn't have as much influence as **'If you pick up all your toys, we will get a Frosty at Wendy's tonight after dinner.'**

'Then the men of Judah came to David and anointed him king over the people of Judah (2Sa 2:4a NLT).'

Note that they approached David. Your giftings will make a way for you. Also, give God time. Judah is just one of the 12 tribes of Israel. David has made good moves to lead Judah. David has been giving them signs he was interested in leading. For example.

- He married Abigail, who was from a prominent family in Judah.
- He sent gifts to the elders of Judah after he wiped out the Amalekites.
- He is living in Judah.

'When David heard that the men of Jabesh-gilead had buried Saul, ⁵he sent them this message: "May the Lord bless you for being so loyal to your master Saul and giving him a decent burial. ⁶May the Lord be loyal to you in return and reward you with his unfailing love! And I, too, will reward you for what you have done. ⁷Now that Saul is dead, I ask you to be my strong and loyal subjects like the people of Judah, who have anointed me as their new king (2Sa 2:4b-7 NLT).'"

- David sent a letter to the men of Jabesh-Gilead who had buried Saul. Basically, David was saying, 'let me be your king, too.'
- It is okay to make your intentions known. Paul even said, 'Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task (1Ti 3:1 NIV).'

However, Abner, general of Saul's army had already anointed Saul's son Ishbosheth king.

Watch your attitude: great leaders are great followers. David senses the time is not right, and he waits for God's timing.

For example, David did not act or take revenge against Saul, and he made no move against Ishbosheth.

- The Bible says, 'Meanwhile, the people of Judah remained loyal to David. ¹¹David made Hebron his capital, and he ruled as king of Judah for seven and a half years (2Sa 2:10-11 NLT).'

- Even though Ishbosheth would reign for only two years, it would be 7.5 years before David was king over all Israel.

We can add to our list though.

Good leaders ...

- Submit to God.
- Listen to others.
- Have vision. David knew he would be king, sent signal he would serve, but he was patient; he waited for God to open the door.

The opportunity arose in an unusual manner.

The armies of Israel and Judah lived side by side for months. Judah being just one tribe of Israel. One day during a friendly competition between 12 men from each army the fighting gets out of hand. 'A fierce battle followed that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by the forces of David. ¹ That was the beginning of a long war between those who were loyal to Saul and those loyal to David. As time passed David became stronger and stronger, while Saul's dynasty became weaker and weaker (2Sa 2:17-3:1 NLT).'

David did not have to order an attack on Israel, it just happened.

As if the story could not get any stranger ...

3. Realignments.

Abner, Israel's general was accused of sleeping with one of Saul's concubines by king Ishbosheth. Abner was furious. 'After all I have done for your father, Saul, and his family and friends by not handing you over to David, is this my reward—that you find fault with me about this woman? ⁹ May God strike me and even kill me if I don't do everything I can to help David get what the Lord has promised him (2Sa 2:8-9 NLT).'

The leader of Israel's army decides to switch sides.

- Abner contacts David, who is willing to negotiate on condition that Abner brings back his wife Michal, Saul's daughter. This was not about love, but power.
- Abner contacts the tribal leaders of Israel saying, "For some time now," he told them, "you have wanted to make David your king. ¹⁸ Now is the time! For the Lord has said, 'I have chosen David to save my people Israel from the hands of the Philistines and from all their other enemies.'" ¹⁹ ... Then he went to Hebron to tell David that all the people of Israel and Benjamin had agreed to support him (2Sa 2:17-19 NLT).'

- Abner brings David's wife Michal to Hebron along with 20 of his men. It is all agreed that Abner and the elders of Israel will make David king. 'So David sent Abner safely on his way (2Sa 3:21 NLT).' Great, Israel's general is going to lead making David king. It is going according to Abner's plan

Unfortunately, no one told Joab who attacks Abner for killing his brother Abishai (2Sa 3:30). Joab is David's general who is away and does not know the plan.

- They buried general Abner in Hebron and 'King David himself walked behind the procession to the grave (2Sa 3:32 NLT).' David even sang a special song at the funeral.
- David genuinely mourned for Abner and the people loved him for it. He held Joab, his general accountable for his misdeed. 'So everyone in Judah and all Israel understood that David was not responsible for Abner's murder (2Sa 3:37 NLT).'

David's innocence in Abner's murder is important because ...

Good leaders ...

- Submit to God.
 - Listen to others.
 - Have vision.
 - Are great followers. David knows where the line is. He respects king Ishbosheth and Abner. Leaders look for opportunities, but they don't create them. Disloyalty breeds disloyalty. You lead who you are – opportunists suffer at the hands of other opportunists, gossips suffer at the hands of gossips, etc. 'And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them (Ps 78:72 NIV).'
- David viewed himself as a shepherd more than a king, and he led with integrity. He was loyal to Saul and his household all his days.

Good leaders ...

- Submit to God.
- Listen to others.
- Have vision.
- Are great followers.
- Serve (they are humble). Even though the idea of being king was planted in his heart, he always viewed himself as that little shepherd boy.

The story switches back Ishbosheth and two opportunists.

4. Ishbosheth.

When king Ishbosheth hears of Abner's dead 'he lost all courage, and all Israel became paralyzed with fear (2Sa 4:1 NLT).'

- Two brothers, Baanah and Recab, saw an opportunity to get a promotion. They were captains in Israel's army. They slipped past a sleeping doorkeeper and murdered Ishbosheth in his bed.
- They beheaded Ishbosheth and brought the head to David. Saying, 'Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of your enemy Saul who tried to kill you. Today the Lord has given my lord the king revenge on Saul and his entire family (2Sa 4:8 NLT)!'

David respected authority and viewed this as insubordination. He had the men killed for their murder of the king. He did not want to lead men who, if they had the opportunity, would murder him in his sleep.

It is now God's time for David.

5. Israel's Throne.

- Remember it took 80 years for Moses to fulfill God's calling.
- Paul spent 3 years in Tarsus before becoming an apostle.
- **I had several years of dying to myself before I was ready to pastor CIC.**
- Don't get discouraged. God has a plan for you, and it will come to pass in his time.
- **Watch your attitude: great leaders are great followers.**

'Then all the tribes of Israel went to David at Hebron and told him, "We are your own flesh and blood. ²In the past, when Saul was our king, you were the one who really led the forces of Israel. And the Lord told you, 'You will be the shepherd of my people Israel. You will be Israel's leader.'" ³So there at Hebron, King David made a covenant before the Lord with all the elders of Israel. And they anointed him king of Israel. ⁴David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in all. ⁵He had reigned over Judah from Hebron for seven years and six months, and from Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years (2Sa 5:1-5 NLT).'

Let's look at the list. There are a lot of qualities we could add here, let me add a couple important ones.

Good leaders ...

- Submit to God.
- Listen to others.
- Have vision.

- Are great followers.
- Get along with others. They maintain great relationships. All of Judah and Israel loved David. *Why?* He was good with relationship. He really cared about people. He was not perfect – he was a lousy husband and father. The next episodes of David’s rule are about his heart and failures.

Conclusion.

Everyone here exercises influence in big or small ways. Let me tell two stories to wrap up here before the storm.

When we were in Bible College, I worked as a Concierge. One of the few perks of the job was a preview night of all the area plays. The night before the opening night, playhouses invite critics, writers, politicians, and influencers.

- It gives the actors an opportunity to run through things with a real and influential audience. The goal was for people like me to tell everyone it is a ‘must see’ play.
- Usually, there were appetizers, beverages, and a chance to mingle. So, lowly, poor Bible college students rubbed shoulders with mayors, judges, and state representatives.
- At one of these events a young man came up excitedly and shook our hands. He asked, ‘what do you do?’ I said I was a concierge and worked at the French Hotel. He dropped my hand, mid-handshake and walked away muttering, ‘you are of no use to me.’
- **He was a user of people.**

Another friend of mine was a great pastor. He pioneered a church from zero to over 5,000 people. They stopped reporting their attendance at that point. He was an okay preacher and was on the local radio.

- However, I saw his pastor’s heart during a staff meeting I happened to be a guest at. There were 20 or so pastors sitting in a circle. He went around the room and asked each pastor about people under their care. ‘Pastor Sam, where are the Andersons? They haven’t been in church for three weeks.’ ‘Pastor John, what is the update on Shirley after her surgery?’
- He knew the condition of his flock (Pro 27:23). Everyone who attended that church knew that Pastor knew their name and loved them.

Friends, as Christians we are called to love people and at times shepherd them. Let's do it with integrity of heart and skillful hands.

'And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them (Ps 78:72 NIV).'

A real leader doesn't overlook people. Jesus said, 'whatever you did for one of the least of these ... you did for me (Mt 25:40 NIV).'

In the end, it is not about position or thrones; it is about servanthood. It is about the basin and towel, washing the feet of others.

Pray.