



What Is God's Process for Promotion

Course KC-202 Lesson I Text

The Reluctant Leader – voting for the one who doesn't want the job.

In the clamor of the call of leadership we often overlook one dramatic fact about biblical leaders. None of them wanted the job! Prophets, evangelists, priests, even the anointed ones often express great dismay over God's assignment. Moses tried several excuses in order to avoid the calling. Jeremiah wished he had never been born. Even Yeshua has a time of great agony over the road that lays ahead of Him. The message seems abundantly clear; men and women who battle for the position of leader are probably the least likely of God's choosing.

God chooses those who are keenly aware of their inadequacies. God does so because these biblical leaders are less likely to lift themselves up with accumulated credit. In other words, pride is so dangerous to true leadership that God seeks the *humble* and the *humiliated* in order to accomplish His purposes. These characteristics are almost exactly the opposite of the factors human beings desire in leaders. If we understand the biblical point of view, we should see nothing but red flags surrounding those who want to be king, even if only king for a day.

The greatest danger for leaders is the fact that there are followers. Pushed by followers who idolize but do not comprehend the agony, the sacrifice and the constant requirement for war against the power of self-deception, many leaders succumb to the accolades of the crowd, and in so doing remove God's hand from their destinies.

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Leadership: Failing to Solve the Real Problem

It's the latest business fad. Everyone seems convinced that *leadership* is the solution to all our problems. Furthermore, it looks as though the collective genius of the age thinks that everyone can be a leader. All they need is training.

Of course, the idea that absorbing correct information will convert us into leaders is just one more example of the Greek educational model. Add money and

you have the world's best recipe for success. Information and money can solve any problem.

Leadership is critical, but what leadership looks like, who functions in the role of leader, what motivates a leader and how we measure success depends a great deal on the embedded worldview. Without a critical assessment of how leadership works, who leaders are and where they are going, we are just as likely to follow Stalin as we are to follow Candhi. World history proves that. Jesus might be touted as the world's best leadership model, but too often our understanding of what He did and what He said are couched in Hellenized language, goals and mission statements. Despite the popularized suggestion, Jesus was *not* a CEO. He didn't manage by any standards common to the world of top executives. In fact, as a CEO He would probably be fired.

We will need a new look at the Jewish Jesus before we can truly appreciate and copy His approach to leadership. Jesus was made manifest to us in flesh and blood so that we can see what the fulfillment of the Old Testament model of leadership really looks like.

Romans 16:25 - *"Now to Him who **is able** to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ."*

Consider this principle in leadership. God provides the power, not me. When a leader begins to think that it is *his ability* and *his vision* that makes the difference, all the followers are in trouble. The mark of a godly leader is his *reluctance* to accept the job in the first place and his continuing *discomfort* with the call. Godly leaders know that the job is bigger than they are. They often feel overwhelmed and inadequate. They should! After all, if I feel up to the task, I don't need that total, voluntary reliance of God's power to get me through. The day a leader starts to think his position is perfect for him is the day he should leave. Godly leadership always stretches us beyond ourselves because it is all about being poured out every day. The godly leader has no reserves. He must come to God every morning for that day's abilities.

Romans 16:25 - *"Now to Him who is able **to establish** you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ."*

Our world loves the phrase, "It's up to you." We take the Greek position of individual responsibility (when we aren't falling victim to entitlement thinking). We adopt the view that my life is in my hands, for better or worse. If I fail, it's my fault. I should have done something differently. If I succeed, then I get the credit. I did the right things. This seems so *natural*, until we confront sin. Then the reality of the world crashes in on us. Even if I want to do the right thing, I discover that I have no power to do it. I end up doing the very things I know are wrong (just take a look at Romans 7). The real truth is this: if it's really up to me, I am doomed to failure. There is nothing in me that will guarantee my success because I do not have the resident power to succeed - even when it comes to holiness and sin.

Deuteronomy 3:26 - *"But the Lord became furious with me because of you and he did not listen to me."*

Because Of You - Do you aspire to leadership? Leadership carries with it enormous consequences for your personal spiritual experience. Moses discovered that he had to pay a price for those who rebelled against the Lord under his leadership even though he was innocent.

We are tempted to think that Moses did not enter the promised land because of some personal sin. But Moses himself says otherwise. God refused to allow Moses to enter the land because the people under his care rebelled against the Lord. In other words, Moses was held accountable for the corporate response of all those who were committed to his leadership. Moses paid for another's sin.

What a devastating reminder this is to us! In a day when we aspire to the status and prestige of leadership, we fail to recognize the terrible responsibility that comes with such a gift. How do you feel knowing that God holds you accountable for those He has put under your care? Are you ready to answer for your children, your Bible study group, your church, your employees? Do you see that their acceptance or rejection of God's purposes has direct consequences for you? How many leaders have never experienced the fullness of God's ultimate intention because they had followers who fell away from the truth? Suddenly we see that the context of God's plan is always within the community. We might stand before Him individually in terms of guilt and forgiveness, but we do not stand before Him individually in terms of the exercise of His purposes. When the Lord asks about our leadership, He will not focus on our personal purity. He will ask about the faith and commitment of those who followed us.

If this doesn't send a chill up your spine, then you do not understand how immense such responsibility is. Moses knew. His entire mission was to bring the people into the land of milk and honey. Everything he did was devoted to accomplishing that goal. But he was denied completion. He ended a life spent in progress unfulfilled - and all because some under his authority chose to disobey. In our Creek world, we think in terms of individual responsibility. But God is not Creek! He thinks in terms of corporate responsibility. You and I better change our point of view.

Is the completion of God's purpose in your life going to be frustrated because someone under your authority chooses to disobey? Does that possibility grieve you? What are you going to do about it now?

2 Timothy 4:2 - *"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."*

Reprove - Paul had a Ph.D. in Jewish theology. His source for theological formation is found in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which he knew very well. So, when it comes to "reprove," Paul does not rely on the larger Creek cultural

meanings. Those meanings include concepts like scorn, bring into contempt, expound, investigate, and shame. No, Paul sticks to a very simple application, right from the Old Testament. The Hebrew root, ykh, is used in the culture of the ancient near-east for a description of the legal proceeding that takes place at the gate of the city. There the elders sat in judgment of various claims and disputes. The parties presented evidence and the elders set the matter right. This is the idea behind the Creek word elenchos. Reproof is not just a matter of pointing out someone's guilt or error. Reproof always seeks to set the matter right, to straighten out the situation so the repentance leads to full restoration. Reproof is an essential part of the larger educational plan of God, for each of us will require straightening in the process of becoming His image-bearers. Discipleship with reproof never attacks to humiliate. It investigates and proclaims in order to redeem.

Proverbs 9:8 shows us that there are two possible reactions to reproof. The fool will scoff at the presentation of sin, but the wise man will open his heart to God's word and humbly seek forgiveness. With this in mind, reproof is an essential characteristic of love. You do not love someone if you are unwilling to confront misaligned behaviors and attitudes. Proverbs 3:12 reminds us that God's reproofs are a sign of His abiding love. To bear another's burden is to take upon yourself the risk of rejection in the presentation of wounds that heal. But don't forget that elenchos is bi-directional. Those who give reproof must also receive reproof. No one escapes the need to be corrected. And everyone is called to act as the burden-bearer of other brothers and sisters.

Today it is very uncomfortable to reprove someone. Today we focus on feelings rather than truth. What a tragic mistake we make! Reproof is not devoid of pity. It comes with compassion, but it does not bend to the wrong priorities. What is at stake is life! When I decide to let the sins of another slide, I place that person in mortal jeopardy. I might as well be kicking them while they are down. Proverbs says that the parent who will not reprove signs that child's death warrant. This is very serious business. Yes, feelings might be hurt, but what matters most – feelings or setting right the relationship with the King?

A leader cannot escape the obligation to reprove. And a leader cannot escape reproof. Leaders are people in the middle – able and willing to bring God's word to light when another falters, and ready and willing to receive God's word as a pruning shears. Are you a bi-direction leader?

Zechariah 4:6 – "This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Yahweh of hosts."

Not By Might – You can make it happen! That's the unstated mantra of leadership training today. Just go to this class, or read this book, or listen to these disks, or attend this conference and, "presto chango", you will be empowered to make it happen. You will take control of your circumstances and become leadership material. Since most of us stand on a Creek, post-modern foundation, we feel the inner self resonating with the desire for control and we buy the mythology. We forget that God's way is nothing like our way.

"Not by might," says the Lord. The Hebrew is *lo vekhayil* (combining the negative *lo* with the preposition *be* and the noun *hayil*). Of course, we think that this means "not by strength." But *hayil* covers a broader spectrum than the size of our muscles. It's not the same word that we find in Deuteronomy 6:5 ("with all your strength"). It's a word that covers the concepts of valor, wealth, influence, virtue and physical and numerical power. God rejects it all! If you thought that God accomplishes His purposes through your valor or wealth or influence or virtue or physical prowess, think again. Over and over, the stories of God's interactions with men demonstrate His refusal to use the methods and tactics that men can commonly employ. God does not do what human beings can do without Him. He does what no man is able to do so that no man can take the glory for the result.

There is a vital principle of biblical leadership in this fact. Too often, far too often, we look to the world's measures of leadership to determine our direction and our commitment. We fall in line behind those who exercise valor, influence, wealth, virtue and prowess. Why do we do this when it is so clear that God goes another way? Because the natural inclination for control is such a dominate force in our lives. We want to control our risk and make things happen. How else can our goals ever be accomplished? It just seems so obvious.

But God is not obvious. He does not do things the commonsense way. He does not take the human approach. The simple truth is that we are unwilling to trust Him. It's a form of decision-making insanity. We know that God is completely sovereign. We know that He loves His children and seeks only what is in our best interests. And we still try desperately to do it our way. We still think it's up to us. We still drink from the "I can make it happen" fountain. We refuse to wait on Him.

Every day for forty years God provided sustenance for the children of Jacob. Every day He reiterated His reliable commitment to them. And after forty years of daily trustworthiness, they were still afraid to enter the Promised Land. So, here we are on the banks of the Jordan. We have had centuries of evidence of God's faithfulness. And we are still trying to build a bridge to get across.

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