



"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."
—Antoine de St. Exupery

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The Heart of a Leader (Part One)

Each year, we observe Pentecost—also called the Feast of Firstfruits—a holy day that looks forward to the final redemption of a tiny portion of mankind, those who are called by [God](#) ([John 6:44](#), 65; [Acts 13:48](#)). Pentecost symbolizes the [firstfruits](#), not only being redeemed, but also being granted authority under [Jesus Christ](#). The [book of Revelation](#) shows the saints being given thrones and serving in positions of judgment and leadership in the [Kingdom of God](#) ([Revelation 2:26-27](#); [3:21](#); [5:10](#); [14:1-5](#); [20:4](#), 6). This shows that the sanctification process includes preparation to exercise authority in the future.

It is crucial to recognize, though, that *leadership* is not the same thing as *authority*. It is always a blessing for the people when the ones in authority are true leaders, but leadership is an internal quality that exists regardless of position. As the politics of this day remind us, many in authority are not true leaders, and conversely men and women of character and competence who lack authority can be "leaders of one." Christians are commissioned to be developing the qualities that will make for good leaders, regardless of whether anyone is under us.

[King David](#) was an exceptional leader, so much so that that when he is resurrected he will be ruling just below Jesus Christ in the Kingdom. In fact, Christ will actually sit on David's throne, as David will have relinquished that position in favor of his Superior ([Luke 1:32](#)). Jesus Christ will be the ultimate fulfillment of the promise that "David will never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel" ([Jeremiah 33:17](#)). The prophecies show, however, that David will be king just below the [King of kings](#) ([Jeremiah 30:9](#); [Ezekiel 34:23-24](#); [37:24-25](#); [Isaiah 55:3-4](#)), so his example of leadership is one we can look to for instruction.

More specifically, many of David's leadership qualities can be seen in the biblical proverbs concerning kings. Though it is not an overriding theme in the book of Proverbs, nevertheless quite a few verses concern "the king." We may interpret this to mean anyone in a position of authority, such as a president, a governor, a boss, or even God Himself. Once we know what to look for, we can clearly see King David in them, as well as the qualities that are important to us as we prepare for rulership.

Consider the things that would have influenced Solomon in writing the book of Proverbs. God inspired the proverbs, but not in the way that He inspired the Bible's prophecies, where God gave His word directly to the prophet, who essentially quotes God. Instead, the proverbs were indeed inspired by God, but they were *informed* by what Solomon had experienced as king and by what he had observed as the son of the greatest human king of Israel. He even begins Proverbs by pointing this out: "The proverbs of Solomon *the son of David*, king of Israel." Solomon was not only divinely gifted with understanding, but he was also blessed in having David as his father and example of leadership.

So when Solomon writes about "the king," he writes about a subject he knows well—and his father was certainly a key part of his education. For example, when Solomon writes, "By [[wisdom](#)] kings reign, and rulers decree justice" ([Proverbs 8:15](#)), he could reflect on his own reign, as well as that of his father David, and recognize the absolute necessity of wisdom if a king would be a true leader and not just someone with authority. As the histories show, Israel and Judah suffered quite a few men of authority who were not true leaders because they lacked godly wisdom.

Along similar lines, when Solomon writes that "it is the glory of a king to search out a matter" ([Proverbs 25:2](#)), he would have first observed this truth by watching his father. King David was known for his equity and for his fairly administered justice. Justice begins with thoroughly searching out a matter to make sure one has all the facts. A king cannot govern if he is unaware of what is going on, and so Solomon says that it is a good thing—an honorable thing—for the king to search out a matter, which means to closely examine it.

Before continuing in the Proverbs, though, we need to gather what we already know about David as a leader. He was well-known for his skill in battle, and his impressive performance in war was instrumental in consistently rallying the people behind him. Yet, those martial skills are not the kind of abilities that impress God.

In the prophecies of his future reign over Israel, he is called by various titles and descriptions: "king," "prince," "shepherd," "servant," "leader," "witness," and "commander." Of those descriptors, the closest thing that fits the role of a warrior is the word "commander." However, the word simply means "one who gives commands or responsibilities," and it is actually rarely used in connection to an army. So David's fighting ability holds little weight with God. What He desires are inward qualities—character—rather than outward skills.

We can see this in the story of Samuel being sent to anoint one of the sons of Jesse. God says, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" ([1 Samuel 16:7](#)). The Lord looked at the hearts of Jesse's sons, and in the youngest He saw the heart of a shepherd. David was a man after God's own heart ([Acts 13:22](#)), and that God, the one who became Jesus Christ, also has the heart of a shepherd.

Jesus calls Himself the "Good Shepherd" ([John 10:11](#), 14)—the best shepherd, of whom David was a mere shadow. But there are similarities between Christ watching over His Father's spiritual sheep, and David watching over his father's physical sheep. The Word looked at the heart of David, and saw a heart that was patterned after His own.

In the next essay, we will contemplate other qualities that made David an effective and righteous leader, as we are being trained to become.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Reluctant Leaders](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The movie the King's Speech contains an example of a man who is reluctant to step into the role which circumstances thrust upon him. Do we as God's called-out ones find ourselves reluctant heirs to the throne or priesthood? We are all commoners, not yet equipped for rulership. The Parables of the Minas and the Talents indicates that we need to be faithful over what we have been given to do, and if we do, we will be given more responsibility in the future. God chooses the base and the weak because they are more pliable and teachable, more productive soil. We are getting the absolute best training in rulership or leadership in the Church of God finishing school, a virtual university of leadership. Much of our training derives from profiting from our mistakes. Thankfully, we have the ability to go right to the Father to ask for wisdom. If we keep the lines of communication open, through Bible Study and prayer, this wisdom (the hidden wisdom of God) is being inculcated into our character. The Holy Spirit is given to all of us (who are currently all over the map) binding us all together in one body. God desires us to acquiesce and defer to His Wisdom in all things. In this context, we should not be reluctant to take up our thrones or future responsibilities. We will be an essential part of God's blessing on humanity, as an extension of Jesus Christ. God will provide us all the power and know-how we will need.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Servant Leadership: Practical Meekness](#)

by David F. Maas

Much has been said and written about leadership in the church in the past several years. David Maas writes that godly leadership is an outworking of the virtue of meekness.

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