

A Leadership Formula

Copyright © Charles M Garriott, 2007
Washington, D.C.

MY FATHER instilled in my siblings and me a formula of leadership. He was a man of integrity, confident and direct. He may not have always made a great sum of money. In fact, I am sure there were times when he lost it. Yet somehow he was always successful. He understood the value of being a visionary and gathering the right people around him to accomplish his goals. He won trust and loyalty from those who knew him as well as those who worked for him. You took him at his word and never doubted the integrity of his statements. What I witnessed in his work was the same as that which I saw inside the home. There were times as a child I dishonored him; there was never a time when my dishonor was warranted. In each season of his life and career, he modeled positive dimensions of a leader.

The children of King David would have said the same. They grew up in the presence of one of the greatest leaders the nation of Israel knew. It would be fair to say he demonstrated a formula of leadership that has been the focus of much study.

The English historian, Paul Johnson, noted this about David:

“David became the most successful and popular king Israel ever had, the

archetype king and ruler, so that for more than 2,000 years after his death Jews saw his reign as a golden age. (p. 54 “ A History of the Jews”)

By no means was his rule without serious challenge, however. Johnson writes that it was always precarious. This was true, and for many reasons. But overall he was a great leader.

Johnson (p. 55) points out David’s greatness as a ruler:

First, ...“He seems to have transformed a throne created by brutal military necessity into a glittering institution, which combined religious sanction, oriental luxury and new standards of culture.”

Second, ...“David’s position as king-priest seemed to have received divine blessing since his purely military achievements were unrivalled. ... David’s kingdom flourished. But his own capacity and experience, his width of knowledge, his travels and his grasp of economic factors, also made the expansions possible.”

Thirdly, ...“ David established a national and religious capital, which was also his personal conquest.”

Johnson’s reasons for David’s greatness center upon his accomplishments. But are accomplishments the true measure of

greatness, or should we look for some qualities in addition to achievements? Is there more to the formula?

What qualities are essential for a leader? Is the main goal to be pragmatic, just get the job done, please the people? Or lead with integrity when it is reasonable? Does one's home or personal life have any bearing on his or her work as a leader? When you consider the qualities of a leader do you look for someone who is autonomous, or dependent? Does a leader need to communicate openly, or be transparent or secretive in his dealings? Does it matter if a leader is dictatorial, or should he lead with consensus and sensitivity to others? Does it matter how a leader deals with the stranger and aliens? Do you care how a leader confronts failure, resolves conflict, perseveres in hard times? What value is there in a leader's ability to respect those who differ and oppose him?

The historic account of David's life and rule as found in Scripture addresses many of these questions. Consider a few aspects of the nature of his leadership.

Child like

King David was child like. He was not autonomous. At the core he was not self-direct, self-sufficient, self-governing. David was dependent. Perhaps you say, "This can not be!" How can anyone who has a 3,000-year-old reputation as a great king be anything but sovereign? But consider the record. Toward the end of his life he had to deal with the reality that his dream and desire would not come true. He wanted to see the Temple built. Through the prophet Nathan God made it clear that David's son, Solomon,

would build the temple. David was not qualified since he was a warrior, a man who shed blood (1 Chronicles 29:3). If David had been more autonomous, he would have acted like Cain who became angry when God would not accept his offering. Instead of submitting to God, Cain turned against Him, lacked repentance, and murdered his brother. David submitted to God's will and rule and looked for ways to serve his son even though he would never see the temple. His assistance took the form of collecting the needed resources that would be necessary to construct the holy structure. When the capital campaign was completed David gathered the community together and spoke these words:

10 "Praise be to you, O LORD,
God of our father Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.

11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.
Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.

12 Wealth and honor come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.
In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.

– 1 Chronicles 29:10-12

These are the words of a man who understood he is not sovereign. His position as King was a gift. The resources used to carry out his rule did not belong to him. Any structure built,

battle or war won, was not a result of his wisdom or power. The kingdom belonged to another. Everything he had and accomplished was credited to the Lord his God. It was upon such an eternal King that David was dependent personally and in his work.

Such a leader is difficult to find in our present day. Faith at times may be used to obtain leadership but not practiced once the position is achieved.

Moral Failure

History has never hidden the truth regarding David's moral failure. The ethical integrity of a leader is not ignored even in a day when faith is often absent and ridiculed. People go to jail for murder, stealing or lying under oath. In any given year the media crave details pertaining to accusations of evil by members of Congress or the administration. The law written upon the hearts of all of Adam's children continues to show itself. There are standards of behavior even though the lines sometimes seem blurred.

Truth in David's day was not fuzzy. The lines were clearly drawn. Even for a king it was expected that the Law given by Moses was not an option. Yet one evening it seemed practical to ignore it.

In the spring of a certain year, King David was unable to sleep. Perhaps the Israeli Ammonite conflict weighed heavily on his mind. What is understood is that when sleep avoided him he was sexually tempted. From the rooftop of his palace he could view an extremely attractive woman – the wife of another – bathing. Her name: Bathsheba. Before

the evening was over he had her brought to his royal chambers and slept with her as if she were his own. In the course of time, her pregnancy became known to David. He believed the matter would best be cared for by murdering her husband. He was successful, and all seemed to be in proper order. David was sure the matter would not haunt him. He was wrong.

The prophet Nathan confronted the king. It was then that he acknowledged what he had attempted to hide. The details of his confession are found in Psalm 51.

The psalm reveals the heart of the king who sees himself as a God offender. It was neither the first nor the last offense. It was out of this occasion that he learned afresh what it meant to be the recipient of God's grace and forgiveness. To me this is an essential and desired quality. It is a distinct mark.

A leader who does not see his or her weakness and sin is a fool. The absence of good sight leads to pride. Such arrogance is the perfect condition for failure. The leader becomes judgmental and hard hearted.

The leader who agrees with the psalmist will demonstrate a posture of humility and dependence upon God. Such a leader will view others with a sense of grace and kindness since he has received such grace from God. Such a leader rules with an understanding of the true nature of man.

At the end of David's life he prepares his son, Solomon, whose mother was Bathsheba, for his kingship. What does a father-king say to his son?

1 When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son.

2 "I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man, 3 and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements ...

– 1 Kings 2:1-3

David knew well the importance and consequences of his words. He was not independent, but dependent upon God. He knew the joy and pleasure of observing God's requirements. He also knew the pain when they are ignored. Such a view makes for a healthy leader.

Faith Expressed

Some assumed years ago that by now anyone who was a serious candidate for office would keep religion to himself / herself. This is far from reality.

Soon after the 2004 election I attended a number of forums in Washington, D.C., hosted by the party that did not fair well. As expected, the party was not rejoicing over its losses. The purpose of the gathering was to review what went wrong and the means needed to make it right the next time around. Part of the concern centered upon the exit polls that seemed to characterize the party as not having values and faith. This depiction was not appreciated.

There was no way for me to know what was true when it came to the beliefs of the party members. But since that gathering I have noticed that candidates for both parties make a point of speaking

out regarding their religious belief and faith.

Much has been written in the past couple of years regarding faith and leadership. Is it fair to use faith as a means of gaining a position of leadership? When is it appropriate to openly express your faith and views?

These questions may exist for those seeking office in the United States and perhaps elsewhere in the world. They were not questions for the head of state in Israel in the 10th century B.C. David understood that faith was not a private matter. You can argue that his time and circumstances were different than those that exist today. However, God has not changed, and that which he requires from us has not altered.

On at least one occasion King David publicly expressed his love and devotion to God by dancing. Don't ask for the name of the dance; I am fairly sure it was not the rumba. But he was celebrating before the Lord. You could not keep him still. And he was highly criticized for his actions. No surprise.

Near the end of his life David gathered the leaders of the nation together and celebrated. Why? God had blessed his efforts of securing the needed means to build the temple, which he would not see.

9 "The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

10 David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

"Praise be to you, O LORD,
God of our father Israel,

from everlasting to everlasting."
– 1 Chronicles 29:9-10

This was not a private act. It was before the world, so to speak. Yes, there are times for a leader of faith to have private worship. There are also times when it is appropriate to go public. The Oklahoma City Bombing and 9-11 were two occasions when it was necessary for leaders to expose their faith and allow the community to join with them. But what about an inauguration? Other forms of tragedy? Funeral for heads of state? Recognition of the completion of a project? Expose one's faith? Why not?

It is terribly tricky in today's world. And if it is done for political gain, it will be obvious. When speaking about our faith in God it is to be done for only one reason: God is to be glorified. All public expressions from the lips of a leader must be done in a humility that resembles one who has been lost in his or her offense to God and is now embracing the gospel.

Certainly the formula for a leader includes accomplishments. But the Scriptures would never agree that accomplishments alone qualify for its formula for leadership.
