

# Following Spiritual Leadership

Several years ago a characteristic of American industry, business, government and other elements of society was that of strong or even dominant leadership. We went through a period of "bull of the woods" type leadership that did not consider the opinions or even the rights of others. Gradually, we started to realize that such styles of leadership were wasteful of the vast human talent that made up the work force. Domineering leadership results in the opinions of only one person being considered and everyone else going along and doing only what they are told to do. What a waste! Today we are well into the transition to the use of teamwork as a means to get things done. There is ample evidence throughout history that when people work together they can accomplish more than just a group of individuals doing their own thing. The idea of the tribe, the city, the state and the nation is an outgrowth of that realization. We teach our children the importance of teamwork in organized sports with the hope that they will be able to bring that which they have learned to the job and to the community. Working together is never more important than when we consider the work of the Kingdom of God. The Church must be a place of teamwork with all the members participating if we are going to be successful in the job to which God has called us.

The concepts of teamwork and leadership are NOT mutually exclusive ideas. Every team needs good leadership. Leading and truly having teamwork that challenges each member to contribute to his or her highest potential is not easy. There must be a realization that being the leader is one of **function** and **role** and not a position of superiority. At the same time, we must realize that being a team member and cooperating with leadership is also a function and role and does not imply inferiority.

In the early days of the nation of Israel these people were a loose confederation of tribes; however, they worked together to get the job done. It took effective leadership to bring such groups together and have them work with commonality of purpose. Joshua provided such leadership. Following the death of Joshua, the nation went through a number of cycles of sin, judgment, repentance, and deliverance. During these cycles, there was usually no teamwork because there was no effective leadership in practice as the people would drift into sin. The sin would manifest itself in people worshipping the gods of the heathen people that were in their society. As they came under the influence of the gods of the Canaanites and other nations they also found themselves under the influence of these people. The abuses that they suffered under such godless domination was judgment. The *consequences* of sin is the judgment of God. The *tragedy* of sin is that the innocent suffer with the guilty. This fact is the strongest argument I can think of regarding why we must have laws limiting what people can do in spite of the counter arguments put forth that "What I do with my body is my business." If you could truly limit the influence of your sin to yourself and it not affect others, then I would think that you might have a valid argument. However, if you drink yourself into oblivion and then get into your car and kill someone, then you have failed to limit the influence of your sin. If you ruin your health and lose your job, then perhaps I should not be concerned; however, the cost of your health care is a drain on society and prevents us from making progress as we try to compensate for such mistakes.

In the case of Israel, the people would come to realize that they were under the judgment of God and as they would grow weary of the oppression they would call out to God in repentance. God would then raise up a leader that would bring the people together and they would be delivered as God gave them victory over their enemies. This period of time in Israel is known as the time of the Judges. Names of judges such as Gideon and Sampson are well known to us. There was also a time that a woman served as a judge in Israel. Her name was Deborah. She judged Israel during a time that the Canaanites were trying to reestablish control of the land. Their influence was mainly in the northern provinces. This idea of teamwork was practiced even by the Canaanites. Jabin, one of the Canaanite kings, recognized the need for working together against the Israelites. So he organized several of the city-states in that region and hired a military leader to pull all their forces together. They were successful in that they were able to oppress Israel for twenty years. By bringing their resources together they were able to have a formidable force of 900 iron chariots with which they established dominance. The key factor in their success, however, was that God allowed them to bring judgment to the nation of Israel because they had abandoned Him. It is difficult for us to realize or admit that God really does chastise us with problems that we encounter. This does not

mean that He doesn't love us; it, in fact, is proof of His love in that He cares enough to do something to bring us back to where we should be.

**JUDGES 4:4-5** God was prepared with a leader through whom He would bring deliverance. He was waiting for the nation to realize that they needed help and when they called out to Him, He was ready to help.

**JUDGES 4:6-7** Apparently, God had been dealing with a potential military leader named Barak. Deborah sent for Barak and asked Him if God had not already called him to take up arms against the Canaanites. Many times God calls us to do something and we feel that we ought to take action, but we are unsure of what we should do. It helps us to have such a call confirmed by a spiritual leader.

Notice that Barak was to draw his army from the two tribes that were most influenced by the Canaanites. Eventually, other tribes joined with them at the time of battle. The lesson to be learned here is that we are expected to take action on the problems around us. Many times people are looking for help from the government or from some outside agency when we should be doing something about the problems that plague us. We do need outside help for many things; however, we should be taking initiative rather than waiting for someone to do it for us.

We see that God had a plan to defeat the Canaanites that would use their strength (iron chariots) against them. God promised to deliver the victory for Israel.

**JUDGES 4:8-10** Barak was unsure of himself and perhaps a little unsure of God. His asking Deborah to come with him in battle could have been a sincerity check to see if Deborah really believed what she prophesied. Barak also realized that Deborah was a person that was close to God and wanted the security of her presence.

Deborah agreed to go with Barak as he led ten thousand men of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun to the appointed place of the battle. Many times the motivating factor for leaders of armies was the glory and fame they would receive upon having won the battle. There was to be no particular honor for Barak because the victory would belong to God. Deborah had a prophecy that told Barak before the fact that the general of the Canaanite army would be killed by a woman. Barak probably thought that Deborah would be that woman, that was not the case.

**JUDGES 4:14-16** By God's instruction, Israel engaged the Canaanites at the Kishon River and then God sent a flood that caused the iron chariots to bog down and become useless. God was in control of the elements of nature and He sent the rain at the right moment; however, Deborah had to be in touch with God to know when to engage the enemy in battle. The Canaanites had put their trust in their chariots and when that failed they panicked and the Israelite army had an easy victory.

When people put their confidence in anything other than God, then they will find that what they are counting on will fail them at some time and in some circumstance. The only sure way is to trust God and avoid the problems that the Israelites often encountered when they drifted away from God.

We see in this account the result of a great partnership of a military leader teamed up with a spiritual leader who was in touch with God. The concept of separation of church and state is an often quoted ideal that is used to eliminate any spiritual influence in our government. This was not the intent of our founding father when they wrote the Constitution. If we eliminate Godly influence in our government, then we wind up with a godless government and sure ruin.