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OVERCOMING RELUCTANCE TO LEAD

Nominating committees in churches or volunteer organizations usually have a very difficult time in carrying out their job. It seems they have to continue to use the same people year after year to staff positions. New people are extremely reluctant to get involved. On the other hand, if a person is too eager, then the committee has concerns about the suitability of the person for the job. The qualities of leadership are easily recognized in a person (after the fact) but are very difficult to define. Many times those who would aspire to leadership are the least qualified to lead, while those who shun the notoriety of the position may be the best leaders.

Part of our problem in stepping up to accept positions of leadership is recognition of our lack of ability or lack of vision. We not only don't know **how** to do; we don't even know **what** to do. Often people are put in leadership positions because they have the ability to get a job done. They may be good at organizing and obtaining resources and executing the work. The fact that they may be working on the wrong the project is not an issue with them. True leadership involves knowing what needs to be done and why.

Many people who are recognized as great leaders in the Bible were reluctant to lead. They too did not know what to do, but God told them what He wanted to accomplish. Often they did not know how to get the job done and God provided people to help. If God is providing the vision of what is to be done and the assistance in how, then the question of success in a position of leadership becomes one of character. Having a clear sense of what is right and wrong and the courage to take a stand for what is right even though it may not be politically correct are essentials for the job.

The nation of Israel had decided they wanted a different kind of government. They wanted to have a king as the other nations did. Even though they had rejected God as their King, God did not abandon them. He was very much involved in the process of selecting a king for the nation. In the process, God would communicate valuable lessons for all of us related to what leadership is (and is not) all about. God was still working through His prophet Samuel in the selection process.

1 SAMUEL 9:15-17 God arranged a meeting between Saul and Samuel. Saul's father had lost some donkeys and sent Saul and one of his servants to find them. They had no success, but the servant suggested that they go and inquire of "the man of God" who lived in a nearby town. That "man of God" was Samuel. I become more and more convinced there are no coincidences in life. The donkeys did not just happen to get out. I believe that God was in control and that it happened on purpose.

God had spoken to Samuel before the encounter with Saul to tell him what He was doing. The Scripture passage (KJV and Hebrew) indicates that God had told Samuel "in his ear" what was going to happen. Many Christians are very reluctant to say that God has told them anything. Many will deny that God still speaks to us today. But Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice." Samuel had his ear tuned to God and was listening for the voice of God. We should do the same.

God had instructed Samuel to anoint Saul as the king (leader) of the nation. The mission for the new king was to deliver the nation from the oppression of the Philistines. The people of Israel felt powerless to oppose the Philistines since the enemy has superior weapons made of iron. In their desperation, they turned to God. We often approach the challenges of life in our own strength. When we do that, we quickly run into limitations because someone is likely to develop greater strength than we have. If we start out relying on and trusting in God, then we can be assured that He will never fail and will always be more than adequate for whatever the challenges might be.

When Samuel saw Saul, God confirmed to him that Saul was the one chosen for the job of leadership. Samuel had no problem accepting this young man as the king. He fit all the expectations of what one would expect to see in a king. He was handsome and tall and looked as a leader should. He would be readily accepted by the people. We typically judge things based on outward appearance and Saul passed the first test.

When Samuel and Saul met, it was a time of feast and offering of sacrifice. During the meal, Saul was given the seat of honor at the table. Afterwards, Samuel talked with Saul and before Saul and his servant left, Samuel requested to speak with Saul alone.

1 SAMUEL 10:1 Samuel anointed Saul king of Israel in private. Later on, there would be a public ceremony in which God's choice would be revealed to the people. This could be telling us

that God deals with us in the quiet and private times of our life. We need to set such time aside so that God can do business with us. When a person walks down the aisle of a church to make a public profession of faith in Jesus, there has to be a private calling a commitment behind what is being declared to the world.

Samuel told Saul several things that would happen to him that day that would confirm that God had really called him to be the king of Israel. God is always willing to confirm His word to us if we are focused on Him.

1 SAMUEL 10:20-24 The time came for the newly chosen king to be presented to the people. Samuel summoned the people to a meeting at Mizpah. He reminded them of their request for a king and went about the formality of selecting a king from among the people. Samuel likely used a process call "casting lots" to show the people God's choice for a king. The first selection was among the tribes and the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then the choice was among families and the family of Matri was selected. Next, Saul the son of Kish was chosen. On the surface, it would appear that they held a lottery and the winner would be the king. However, we know from the previous information that God had already chosen who would be king. In fact, Saul had already been anointed as king. The events of the day were only a formality for the benefit of the people.

When they looked for Saul, he could not be found. Saul was perhaps reluctant to be present when the lot was cast and the choice was announced to the people. Perhaps it was fear of rejection by the people or just modestly. This show of humility was likely thought to be a virtue and a sign of wisdom by those who observed Saul's actions. In the most ancient cultures, the concept of "avoiding envy" of those in your society was prevalent. It was probably a secret to survival in such societies. Those who would be too forward would be rejected. Those who seemed too proud would be resisted. Those who flaunt their wealth, get robbed. Those who abuse their power get killed.

They found Saul hiding among the baggage and when he came out to meet the people he was immediately accepted by them because he had the appearance of a leader. He was much taller than all the rest of the people. Samuel declared Saul to be the one whom God had chosen to lead the people.

Saul was willing to accept the challenge to which he was called and we should make sure we are available and willing to serve in situations where God wants to work through us.