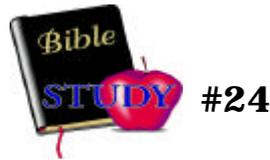


Journey Into God's Word



I Kings 17-22

Jeremiah 31-45

Titus 1-3

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

God is calling you into new dimensions of leadership. Our Bible reading this week not only gives you clear instructions on how to become a great leader, but also examples of both effective as well as ineffective leaders. As you study **I Kings 17-22** and **Jeremiah 31-45**, you will meet both good and bad leaders. In order to learn the difference between such; let's begin by looking at **Titus 1-3**.

Paul's letter to Titus is one, which involves helping the young man Titus grow into leadership. Paul begins his letter by showing the first step toward leadership is knowing who you are and what you are living for. "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life."(**Titus 1,1,2**) Then in verses **6-9** of chapter 1, Paul proceeds to describe what some of these characteristics for leadership is. As you read these verses, please write what characteristics Paul mentions. Did you notice that most of the qualifications cited involved character rather than knowledge or skill? Remember that your life-style provides a window into your character. "An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable; one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it."(**Titus 1:6-9**) With the above character descriptions of leadership in mind, please state whether you feel the following were good leaders or bad ones. Please list your reasons for identifying each of the following as such. Each of these leaders is described in **I Kings 17-22**. 1. Elijah 2. Obadiah 3. Ahab 4. Jezebel 5. Jehoshaphat 6. Micaiah

Please do the same with the following leaders described in **Jeremiah 31-45**.
 1. Zedekiah 2. Jehoiakim 3. Ebed-Melech 4. Gedaliah 5. Ishmael 6. Johanan.

In **Titus 2** you see the word self-control used 4 times. Please note each time how this word is used and why you feel it is an important characteristic of leadership. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.”(**Titus 2:11-14**) Even as things seem to go from bad to worse, we can be leaders when it comes to being good and doing good. It’s the grace of God that enables us to say “No” to wickedness and “Yes” to godliness and acts of compassion. We have that blessed hope that Jesus is coming back again. Jesus who redeemed us has also purified us to be His people of compassion. He is calling us to be leaders who will feed the hungry, shelter the homeless and reach out through His love to the hurting. Because Christ, the hope of glory dwells within us, we will not turn away from the needy even though everyone else may. He has redeemed us and purified us to be a people who are eager to do good. “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.”(**Titus 1:15,16**) How does **I Kings 21** show that this was the condition of Ahab and Jezebel? “There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the Lord drove out before Israel.”(**I Kings 21:25,26**) Yet when Ahab repented in deep humility, God forgave him and reduced his punishment. (**I Kings 21:27-28**) How does God’s mercy through Jesus Christ provide hope for even the worst of sinners? “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are

excellent and profitable to everyone.”(**Titus 3:3-8**) In what way are you devoting yourself to doing what is good?

In **I Kings 17-21** we see that when God spoke, Elijah obeyed. How did God provide for Elijah in **I Kings 17:1-6**? In what way is provision made for this man of God in **I Kings 17:7-24**? In **I Kings 18** we see the great showdown taking place between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Please describe this event. How is Elijah’s proclamation to the people in **I Kings 18:21** relevant today? “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” What steps does God take to rejuvenate Elijah in **I Kings 19**?

Jeremiah is another man who obeyed God when doing such was difficult. In **Jeremiah 31-45** we see Jeremiah proclaiming the Word of the Lord even when it meant rejection, ridicule, imprisonment and even being thrown in the bottom of a cistern. Not only did Jeremiah proclaim the Word, but he also listened and obeyed. “Then the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: ‘I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for Me?’”(**Jer. 32:26,27**) Why do you feel it is necessary for a leader to be able to hear, believe and obey in this way? “This is what the Lord says, He who made the earth, the Lord who formed it and established it—the Lord is His name: Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”(**Jer. 33:2**) Calling on the Lord and listening for His answer are essential for those in leadership. Please describe Jeremiah’s prayer found in **Jeremiah 32:16-25** and the Lord’s answer. In **Jeremiah 42** we see Jeremiah praying and the Lord’s response. What did the people then do as described in **Jeremiah 44**? How does Jeremiah show great courage and leadership even when those he is ministering to do not respond in a positive way?

The time has come “‘to wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Be very careful, then, how you live not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”(**Eph. 5:14-20**) As you examine your personal life in the light of the scriptures and the examples provided by Elijah and Jeremiah, what changes do you believe are necessary before you can become a dynamic leader? Such

leadership development takes time, patience, prayer and obedience. “After a long time, in the third year, the Word of the Lord came to Elijah.”(**I Kings 18:1**)

Even after great victories, leaders can face burnout and depression. Did you note earlier how God ministered to Elijah in **I Kings 19**? “Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord,’ he said. ‘Take my life;’”(**I Kings 19:3,4**) Such a reaction is often the result of exhaustion. It’s time to get a good night’s rest. “Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.”(**I Kings 19:5**) Often malnutrition causes burnout and one or two good nutritious meals may be needed. (**I Kings 19:5-9**) The time has come to arise and obey the Word of the Lord. When God spoke to Elijah it was not in the powerful wind, the earthquake, or the fire. It came as a gentle whisper. The still, small voice of the Lord in the light of the scriptures still speaks to us today. What specific jobs does God give Elijah to do in **I Kings 19:15-17**? Overcoming burnout and being an effective leader involves remaining in the presence of the Lord, hearing His word and training others. Please read **I Kings 19:17-21** and note how Elijah went and recruited Elisha under the Lord’s direction. After Elisha was recruited to join the school of the prophets, what action did he take in verses **20** and **21**?

When comparing Jezebel and Elijah, we see two people who are leaders and are very committed. The big difference is what and whom they were committed to. Jezebel was committed to herself and getting things her way. Elijah was totally committed to God. In the end God proved Elijah was right. But when the circumstances dictate otherwise, it is hard to believe and remain committed to God. For example, Elijah “did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordon, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from brook. Some time later, the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.”(**I King 17:5-7**) At that point it would have been easy for Elijah to panic if he had been looking to the brook and the ravens as his source rather than the Lord. But Elijah didn’t panic; instead he trusted and “then the Word of the Lord came to him: ‘Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in the place to supply you with food.’”(**I Kings 17:8,9**)

Often the things God directs us to do just don’t make sense. For example, Jeremiah is told in **Jeremiah 32** to buy a field. Jeremiah desires to be obedient but

he just does not understand why he must buy a field this time. Therefore, he humbly comes to God in prayer. In his prayer he declares, “See how the siege ramps are built up to take the city. Because of the sword, famine and plague, the city will be handed over to the Babylonians who are attacking it. What you said has happened, as you now see. And though the city will be handed over to the Babylonians You, O Sovereign Lord, say to me, ‘ Buy the field with silver and have the transaction witnessed.’” Then the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for Me?”(**Jer. 32:24-27**) Please read the rest of the chapter and state why God wanted Jeremiah to buy the field even though the nation is on the verge of collapse. The fact is Jeremiah obeyed because he was committed to God and not to himself, like Jezebel and Ahab were. To whom are you committed? How does God’s Word evaluate your commitment? “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.”(**Titus 3:14**) May we continue to grow in our commitment to the Living God by doing good and living productive lives? Please join me this week in reading **II Kings 1-8, Jeremiah 46-52** and **I Peter 1-5**. “Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.”(**Titus 3:15**)

Yours in Christ’s love and service,

Larry Rice