

The Character of a Leader

1 Chronicles 28:1-3, 5

Recently all of us had the opportunity to watch in part or in whole, the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. For almost two years we have been inundated with presidential campaigns and in the next ninety days we will select our next President. The Bible has a lot to say about "The Character of a Leader." But we need more than a leader in the White House; we need leaders in Congress, our State, our community and in our church.

Speaking of the White House, it serves as the official residence for the President of the United States. It stands on 18 acres along Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington, DC. My senior year in college I was fortunate to be elected as President of the Student Government Association at the University of North Alabama and as a part of those responsibilities I attended a College Student Leaders Conference in Washington DC. I also was privileged to tour the White House and get a VIP Tour of this important historical landmark.

The interesting thing about the White House is every President in the history of this country has lived there except one, and the one who didn't was George Washington. Here's the interesting fact. It was George Washington who chose the site where the White House would sit. It was George Washington who selected the architect who would design it. It was George Washington who made sure that the government provided the funds to build it. But he never lived there himself.

George Washington was a servant leader. Although he knew he would never live in the White House he took great pains to make certain it would be a house that would befit the President of the United States. George Washington was a man who was willing to look beyond personal benefit to see the much larger picture of having an influence over those who would live in the future.

George Washington was just like another great leader, King David. In *1 Chronicles. 28* we read the background of this story.

"Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the leaders of Israel: the officers of the tribes and the captains of the divisions who served the king, the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possessions of the king and of his sons, with the officials, the valiant men, and all the mighty men of valor.

Then King David rose to his feet and said, 'Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it.' But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood.' And of all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel." (1 Chron. 28:1-3, 5)

David was going to plan for the building of God's temple. David was going to pay for it. But he would neither build it nor live to see it.

Why did God start with David to build His house? Because whenever God does something He starts with a leader; and from the leader He goes to the leaders.

When God gives a vision He gives it to the leader. When God guides His people He guides them through the leader. There is a reason for this, and it is found in the truest statement made outside the Bible: *"Everything rises and falls on leadership."*

When God moves, where does He start? He starts with leadership. But the next statement may surprise you.

Leadership is not a matter of position, prestige, or personality. A leader is someone with a passion to get in on a God-given vision and to use his influence to make it a reality. Every one of you can exhibit the character of a leader.

When God wants to do something God starts with -

I. Leaders Who Model a Love for God

Remember David is about to give his money to build something he would gain no personal benefit from. He would never experience it, he would never enter it, and he would never enjoy it. So why did he give?

"Furthermore King David said to all the congregation: 'My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God. Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance.'" (1 Chron. 29:1-2)

His gift was to the Lord. He was not giving to the house of God; he was giving to the God of the house. Never forget that this church is not really our church; it's not really your church; it's not really my church; it is God's church. Whatever you do for the church you really do for God.

But more than that his gift was out of love.

"Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver..." (v.3)

Because David loved the God of the house, he loved the house of God. True giving is an expression of love. *"God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son." (John 3:16)* You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

The Christian life begins and ends with a love for God. Jesus said the first commandment and the greatest commandment is: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, and all of your strength." (Mt. 22:37)*

I want you to concentrate over the next several days not just on what you give to God, but why you give to God. You see, sometimes we get hung up on methods, and we forget motives.

I heard about a young lady who wrote this note to her ex-fiancé. It read:

Dear John:

I have been unable to sleep since we broke off our engagement. It has shattered me. I just can't live any longer without you. Won't you forgive and forget? Your absence is breaking my heart. I was a fool to leave

you. Nobody can take your place. I love you so much. Please call soon. I am waiting by the telephone.

Love always,

Linda

P.S. Congratulations on winning the \$5 million lottery!

We all have our motives, but a real leader is motivated by a love for God.

II. Leaders Who Motivate Servants of God

A true leader is someone who wants to motivate others to follow their example.

"Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver: three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses; the gold for things of gold and the silver for things of silver, and for all kinds of work to be done by the hands of craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?" (1 Chron. 29: 3-5)

Quite frankly, it is hard to really picture what David did in this offering. There was 300 tons of gold involved, 110 tons given from David's own personal treasury. Using the present value of gold, David's gift would have been in the neighborhood of over \$68 billion! Any good leader is always willing to do at least what he is asking others to do, if not more.

But don't miss this. David told them why he gave before he told them what he gave. He gave *"because he had set his affection on the house of his God."*

I speak as a parent, not as a pastor, when I tell you this. Your children are always doing three things 24-7:

- 1) They Are Looking;
- 2) They Are Listening;
- 3) They Are Learning.

You see, there is one thing that is true of every one of us in this room; we are all examples. In fact, we are examples in more ways to more people than we even realize.

Coach John Wooden was the most successful college basketball coach of all time. One of the things he drilled into the heads of his players was the importance of setting an example. Every year he would have his team learn this little expression:

*No written word, no spoken plea,
Can teach our youth what they should be;
Nor all the books on all the shelves:
It's what the teachers are themselves.*

When others saw what David did, they followed his example. *"Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly." (v.6)*

You can be a leader by the example you set. You can lead others to have a positive attitude about this church by your attitude. You can lead others to be friendly to guests by your being friendly to guests. You can lead others to give to this church by your giving to this church.

III. Leaders Who Maintain a Walk with God

"Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly. They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.

And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and King David also rejoiced greatly (vv. 6-9)

Giving people are a happy people. *Verse 9* tells us why they were so happy; they *"offered willingly" and they did it with a "loyal heart."* They had a spirit that was willing to obey God and a heart that was willing to trust God.

This is so important to understand. It was their spirit and their heart that impressed God, not their offering. You notice that some gave gold and some gave iron. Now there is no comparison between the value of gold and the value of iron; but God values iron more than gold if the iron is given with a willing spirit and a loyal heart.

Jesus told one of the most fascinating stories about giving and how God sees giving in the *Gospel of Luke*. It's the story of a widow, dirt poor, living on welfare, fixed income; but she gave an offering that impressed all of heaven. *"Just then Jesus looked up and saw the rich people dropping offerings in the collection plate. Then he saw a poor widow put in two pennies. He said, 'The plain truth is that this widow has given by far the largest offering today. All these others made offerings that they will never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford-she gave her all!'" (Luke 21:1-4 - The Message)*

You know why Jesus was so impressed by this widow's offering, and not the rich people's offering? The rich gave out of their surplus, but the widow gave out of her heart.

I read one of the most amazing stories about Billy Graham just recently. Many decades ago just as Billy Graham's work was beginning to expand, there was a very wealthy man that asked to meet with him down in Florida. Dr. Graham went to Palm Beach to meet with this man and after some small talk the man said, *"Billy, you ought to be able to put all of your time into the type of work you are doing-revival work, preaching the Word, winning people to Christ. You don't need to be spending time trying to raise money."* He then said to Dr. Graham, *"I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm willing to underwrite your work so you won't have to worry about finances. I'll pay for every bit of your ministry. How would you like that?"*

Billy Graham's response to this day astounded me. He said, *"I'm sorry, but I can't accept that. My work is spiritual work. We're getting about 15,000 to 20,000 letters a week. Most of those letters will have a little money in them; maybe a \$1 or maybe \$5. But every one of those letters is saying, 'We're praying for you.' If*

they know there is a rich man that is underwriting my work they'll stop praying, and when they do my work will go under, so I can't accept it."

Dr. Graham understood that real leaders are people who walk with God and these are the people that need to support God's work; the people who have a willing spirit and a loyal heart.

IV. Leaders Who Magnify the Praise of God

When the offering is taken and the money is counted, King David did not pat himself on the back; he pointed to heaven. He gave God all of the glory.

"Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation and David said: 'Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.'" (vv. 10-14)

Do you know what the church is all about? Do you know what life is all about? Do you know what this universe is all about? It is all about the glory of God.

When Jesus was about to go to the cross He was so troubled in His heart that for the only time in His life He was at a loss for words. *"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour." (John 12:27)* What could He say now that He was about to die for the sins of the world?

Well as always He said exactly the right thing. He said, *"Father, glorify Your name." (John 12:28)* That's why Jesus came, lived and died, to glorify God. That's also why we are here-to glorify God.

We need leaders who will model a love for God; who will so live they motivate servants of God; who will maintain a walk with God, and who will have a passion and a zeal to bring glory to God. Will you be a leader?

Who will step up to the plate and say, "God, whatever you want to do, start with me. I will be a leader for your glory."