

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for May 1: Overcome your fears

April 19, 2011

Most of us usually think of Bible characters who stand out as great leaders and more than ordinary. On the other hand, we see ourselves as ordinary. So, we excuse ourselves from taking the role of leadership and leave it to “special” people. However, those “great” biblical leaders were ordinary people just like us who were willing to serve an extraordinary God. What does it take to become a great leader? Let’s take some time and reconsider.

Accept responsibility (Joshua 1:1-5)

If we look back on our lives, we will discover God has been preparing us to become leaders. That’s right, he has been preparing us by developing our character and allowing us life experiences. Thus, when the time comes, we can lead.

Leadership in the true spiritual sense is not a title or position but a sense of what God is doing in the life of his people and helping others to see it and lead them to actively cooperate with what God is doing. Every leader will grow old and eventually die including the “great” Moses. In every generation leaders will have to rise up and fill the gap. Joshua didn’t just step into the role of the leadership of God’s people. He had been Moses assistant; he was prepared by God.

We, too, have been prepared to lead. Maybe we haven’t been prepared to lead a great number of people across a flooding river, but we have been prepared and, therefore, have a responsibility to lead someone to the place

God wants them to be. This could be our family as we lead them to follow Jesus.

It could be our coworkers as we introduce them to the peace only Jesus can give. Or it could be in the context of our own church when we bring glory to God by attempting something that only can be accomplished by his doing it through us.

Somewhere in your life, you have a responsibility to lead. Whatever that might be, God has been and will continue to be with you. He will supply all you need to accomplish his purposes.

Hear God's command (Joshua 1:6-9)

If God truly has been preparing, then he must be planning to use us. However, God's plans don't always agree with what we anticipate. God often takes people out of their comfort zones and puts them in situations where they feel inadequate. It is in those situations that fear can cause us to ignore God's call to lead.

Just ask Moses, one of the Old Testament prophets, or the disciples of Jesus. They all would tell you the same story. God doesn't always ask us to do things we could do on our own. Therefore, what he asks often requires a dependence on him. But, if we would remember that those who led before us often experienced the same emotions and yet obeyed and were successful, we would be encouraged.

We, as they did, also need to hear God clearly about what he wants us to do. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). The call of God for us to lead will sound familiar because we will have heard similar stories before in our previous encounters with his word. His voice, as he calls us in the present day, will be recognizable, because it will agree with what we already have heard from him in our study of his word. There is a certain confidence that becomes ours when we hear and

read the word of God, especially when we study it, and that confidence will enable us to face our fears.

Act courageously (Joshua 1:10-11, 16-18)

Often, it is not only what we think, but what we think others are thinking that causes us to doubt ourselves as leaders. How many times have we thought “Who am I to lead”?

That is not such a bad question to ask, especially if it comes from a position of humility and not inferiority. In fact, it may indicate you are just the person to lead. Jesus did say the greatest leaders among us would be those who were humble. Yet, we must remember that God is the one who ultimately qualifies us for leadership.

If he calls, then without question you are qualified. It is not what you or anyone else thinks that matters. If God has called us to lead, then he expects us to trust him and “Just Do It” as a famous shoe company might say.

The circumstances we are called to lead in or through, no matter how difficult or chronic, do not ultimately determine our victory or failure, God does. Our attitude should be that the God who can do all things is right there beside us—we are not alone. With that attitude, we can’t help but be courageous.

Think about it. Joshua was able to do what Moses never did: lead God’s people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Isn’t that what our leadership will be about too? Aren’t we to help people get past all the obstacles that prevent them from realizing the promises of God?

Questions for reflection

- What fears keep you from following God’s call to lead others to him?

- How might God be preparing you to lead in your church?
- How do you rely on God's presence and power to follow his call?