

A Bit About Leadership

Pastor Jeff Wood

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Do you influence anyone? Do you have an effect on ... Your mother? Your grandchildren? Your husband? Your wife? Your neighborhood association? You may say, "Not much." But that is not what I am asking you. I am not asking how much but if you have ANY.

Do you have influence at church? Ladies in your Presbyterian Women group when you eat the cake for a friend and sing happy birthday? When you smile and welcome someone in the row next to you enthusiastically do they settle into their chair more easily, sing more deeply, lean into the sermon more earnestly? You may say, "Not a lot." But that is not what I am asking you. I am asking not about a little or a lot. I am asking if you have any influence whatsoever.

Or with yourself, do you have any influence? Do you ever say, "Self, get off your duff and do something"? Is that not influence with yourself?

I think we'd all agree we do have influence, at least some. It's Leadership Season and I ask these questions because we all tend to say more often than not that we're not leaders but all leadership is influence.

I say it's Leadership Season because we had the Leadership Summit on Thursday and Friday and 22 of us went. We heard top level business leaders and pastors from all over the world, men and women, people of all colors.

I say it's that season because we have the nominating committee looking for elders. We know about elders as leaders.

There are turkey seasons for hunting turkeys, and stewardship seasons, and leadership seasons. While turkey season has definite dates, stewardship ... and leadership season is 365 days and part of nuts and bolts of everyday living.

And it's part of the nuts and bolts of everyone's everyday living. It's too easy to say, "I am not a leader." But if you have influence, and everyone does, leadership is present. Does your positive comment about, for example, volunteering in thrift shop influence another to also be positive? Probably, and that little bit right there is leadership. So it's nuts and bolts of everyone's everyday living, leadership is.

Even if no one else is around, we must lead ourselves. We manage our food, sleep, habits, time with friends, what kind of friends we are with, and on and on. Self-leadership means it is always leadership season for all of us.

Pray.

The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people--

men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain--and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves. Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country. Exodus 18:13-27

Remember, just because I use the word, "leader," don't say this sermon isn't for you. We all think in some way, "I'm a follower, not a leader." But we just admitted to having influence, not necessarily a lot but some and therefore we lead ... like it or not.

We think, "I'm an Indian not a chief." That's true for everyone. When it's hunting season the best hunter is chief in a way, especially for the best gatherer. And when it's gathering season, the best hunter becomes a follower. So, still, there's some way that you're just a good fit at a particular time and you do lead.

We say, "I'm a fish, not a fisherman." Jesus said, he'd make us fishers of men. So, what, sorry Jesus I'm staying just a fish, end of discussion?

Same thing about always being a sheep and never being a shepherd. He wants us being good shepherds to those in need.

I'm a guest and not a host? Selfish arrangement but ... really?

I'm a taker not a giver? That doesn't sound too good.

We all influence. Even if we say we don't and won't, just by this we abdicate and influence by letting someone else do the influencing. By not, for example, saying, let's take something obvious, I'm not going to say anything about drug use, there are plenty of pushers who will advocate taking them. By being quiet, you influence letting the vocal take over. Someone said that all that evil needs to advance is for good people to do nothing. So listen, this is for all of us.

Related to our text here are four observations on Christians and Christians influencing or Christians leading. First, there are no perfect leaders, there are *regular* ones. Moses had a skirmish with the law, ran tail between his legs, had a career descent, a father-in-law, a stammer ... regular people do these sorts of things.

Jethro, the father-in-law was a regular guy. He isn't regaled as a Middle East Fortune 500 CEO or a spiffy product dropped from heaven. The fifty, the ten, ... who helped Moses were regular people. Not one of them is cited as having an MBA from Harvard. They didn't come down out of the mist on Mt. Sinai.

Last week we said that God communicated through regular people writing letters and this week we can say God leads through regular people leading. Sometime when leadership is brought up, it's the Fortune 500 CEOs, the Bill Gates, the Colin Powells, the John Kennedy's and the Johnny Unitas's ... and these look like giants on the landscape of humanity and

leading can become so idealized that no one but a giant can be one.

We make it so that in ours' and others' minds it is only for the superhuman. It is like all that stuff about the perfect marriage, the perfect pastor, the perfect church, the perfect leader. There are good ones but there aren't perfect ones.

A pastor once asked rhetorically, Is there anyone here who knows someone perfect? A voice came from the back of the church, "Yes, apparently my wife's first husband!"

There's no perfect person. Only Jesus. I tell new members that if you find a perfect church, don't join it because it won't be perfect anymore. There are no perfect churches and there are no perfect leaders. There are regular ones.

So when it comes to you or someone else who is influencing, when you look at yourself or another and find a wart, that doesn't disqualify you. In fact, it is the opposite! It qualifies you.

Second, influencing and leading involves regular people and it involves *many* regular people. It's about many, not one Lone Ranger. I had written this sermon down before the Summit but then I found in the last talk of the Summit the speaker saying, "Lone Rangers don't make leaders; Lone Rangers make movies and pretty mediocre ones at that and movies aren't real."

Do you see it never was just Moses. There was Moses and Aaron ... and Miriam ... and Jethro ... and now fifty. Leadership involves regular people. Leadership involves *many* regular people.

Again, we tend to see the General Patton out in front of the battle lines, the NFL head coach, the maestro with the orchestra and we think of a one-

person package. But General Patton had colonels to advise, supply trains to support, soldiers to follow. The NFL coach has offensive, defensive, quarterback, linesmen coaches. He is not an island by himself. The maestro has first chairs in each section and they have second chairs.

We are always sharing and complimenting so you don't have to do it all. The way Paul puts it in the NT is that one's a toe, one's an eye, one's an ear, and we need each other. We do it better together.

In the little league stands one day I heard a dad yell to his son on the pitcher's mound, "Trust your team." He was saying, "Put it across the plate instead of throwing balls because there are other kids out there who know how to catch and get the batter out." The Bible is a team production. The Trinity is a team. Church leadership is about team.

If I see a guest, a visitor attending one of our services, I want them to feel welcome. I feel responsible for that. And let's say, as has happened on occasion, I can't get to that person because I'm intercepted by another person, or a responsibility like I have to preach in five minutes, or an issue ... I can sweat it or I can say, there are elders here ... those who are on the session now or those who were at one time and they know they're counted on to help with the load. That's teamwork.

So if you are thinking leadership means me and I don't have the time or the wherewithal, think instead that leadership means *us* and I don't have to have it all. I don't have to do it all. In fact, say to yourself, "I need to be smart enough not to try that!" ... "I need to have godly character, a willingness to make a contribution, and the humility to trust a team."

Third, leadership involves regular people, many regular people, and many regular *developing* people. I mean “developing” in two ways – developing the self and developing others. Moses got better and he got others better. He evolved and he got others involved.

People in love and marriage say, “I’m lucky. I have a great marriage.” We know what they mean, but the reality is, that great marriages aren’t found, they are made. So it is with leaders. They get better.

And, always find someone to delegate to, to share with ... *so they can develop*. You and me holding all the leadership marbles, all the knowledge, all the influence, doesn’t work

The Global Leadership Summit is a way I try to evolve. I learn things and get better so we all can get better.

The Global Leadership Summit is a way I try to get others involved. And you who have been to the Summit, look around right now. You’re evolving and the next step is for you to be involving. Who will you get involved in the Summit next year?

One of Moses’s credits, worked out in him through God, is that the whole Hebrew people enterprise didn’t fall apart when he was gone. Why? He developed himself and he developed other leaders who could keep things going.

Is there someone here at our church who, if they went down in some fashion, we’d be left high and dry? If that’s you, find someone and make them your vice chairman, your vice chairwoman.

Joan puts out the flags on Memorial Day. She enjoys it. But she also realized that if she didn’t get someone to take over, she might stop being able to and the whole putting out of flags might stop.

Finally, the fourth bit about leadership is not just regular people, many regular people, many regular developing people, but many regular developing people for others.

Moses didn't lead for himself. He led for God and for the Hebrew people.

In leadership there is always an implicit contract. I give you trust and power and obedience in return for you helping with my welfare and growth.

If our kids go to a football coach, they put themselves in an arrangement of trust and power. They give power to the coach in the trust that he will improve them as players and meld them together as a team. If that coach, the one entrusted, the trustee, fails to do what is needed because he is afraid to or so that he will be liked, and puts them, for example, because they don't feel good about wind sprints on a twinkie and tv workout, he has at the basic level broken faith with the kids. Moses and God were up, not to win a swimsuit contest with the Hebrew people, but to help them.

Jim Collins, a writer on leadership, a professor at West Point on leadership, used to comment, look for those who want to do something rather than be something.

One of the speakers I heard this week was a pastor for Nigeria. His little church that he started 22 years ago is now 25,000 people. In his culture, he explained, when a church gets that big, the pastors get bodyguards, and these men push people back, open doors, make a pathway, and all that sort of thing. (I'm going to be asking the session next month for a couple of bodyguards.) He chided them to never push people back for him. He explained to them, "They are not

here because I am special. I am here because they are special.”

When you are focused on others and doing what is best for them, not making it about sentiment but about their good. Do something for others. It all comes down to regular, many people doing something for others. That’s what love sooooo ... if you want to love, you lead.

A last story in closing. Henrietta Mears was from Fargo, ND. She became a Sunday School teacher in a Presbyterian church. From that Sunday School role she became an influence on Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. An influence on Jim Rayburn who went on to found Young Life. Louis Evans who founded Bel Air Presbyterian Church, where Ronald Reagan attended. Dale Bruner, a New Testament Scholar. Earl Palmer, senior pastor influencing student after student at Berkley and then the University of Washington. A little ol’ lady from Fargo, ND teaching Sunday School... and through her tens of thousands. Do we have any little ol’ ... ladies? Men? Not so little? Not so old? You can be God’s message. You can be God’s influence. We’re regular; we’re many; we’re developing; we’re loving. It is so. Let it be so.

If you would like to talk with someone about this message or your spiritual life, or to have someone pray with you, the pastors and elders of the church would welcome your call.

pastorjeffwood@gmail.com www.welovefirst.org
www.facebook.com/welovefirstsebastian