

*Me, the Leader?*<sup>1</sup>

**A Message for Men**

Don Burke

They just stood there – staring. Twenty-four fourth-grader eyes, and all of them looking right at me. Any other time I would just be one among this group. But this recess was different – and the pressure was on. “Oh my..., what have I gotten myself into?!”

The whole situation started with my bright idea that it would be great to have a club for my friends and me. So I told the guys in class that we were going to start a club during the afternoon recess. It must have been a reasonably good idea because about a dozen guys showed up. This was so cool! ...well, it was cool until we got to the part where everyone was looking at me, wanting to know what we were going to do in this club I just started. That’s when I discovered a huge oversight in my plan. It never occurred to me that starting a club meant that I would need to provide some leadership in the club – like what were we going to do. And since I wasn’t prepared to give that leadership, you won’t be surprised that the club didn’t last any longer than that one fifteen-minute recess.

Okay..., lesson learned, right? Well, maybe not as much as I’d like to think. The truth is, in the years since that fourth-grade experience I’ve seen the same questioning look in other eyes – and even in my own. There was the time some fifteen years later when I married the girl that I loved and that loved me..., and soon afterwards I’m looking at myself in the mirror wondering how I’m supposed to be the leader of our new family. Or later when I accepted a promotion at work because of the new opportunities that came with it, only to soon find myself

---

<sup>1</sup> This article appeared in the October 2011 issue of the *Missouri Missionary Baptist* and the November 9, 2011 issue of the *Baptist Trumpet*.

at the head of the conference table at a department meeting – *my* department meeting – with all eyes upon me and I had no clue what to say. And I know that many men find themselves in the same situations at times. Is there anything that can help us know how to better handle our roles as leaders?

Actually, the Bible speaks to this issue, and in one case shows how God worked through a very reluctant leader to accomplish something really great. The man's name was Gideon, and you can read his story in Judges 6-8. Here are some principles his story teaches us about our role as godly leaders – even when we're not expecting or prepared for the role.

**Don't Expect Much Help from the World around Us.** In Gideon's day the enemy was poised to intimidate and crush any leadership that would arise among God's people. And it's no different in our world today. What percentage of the sitcoms you've seen lately showed a rational and responsible man in the role as the real head of his family? The typical commercial portrays men as the dufus. Men, the world is out to downplay and undermine our leadership role. Don't let the world set your pattern for leadership.

**A Timid Start Is Better than No Start at All. However, We Must Ultimately Make a Confident Stand as We Follow God's Clear Directions.** Gideon worked on his first assignment as leader in the middle of the night because he was afraid – which doesn't exactly make him the poster boy for brave, bold leadership. But at least he was willing to start in the right direction. And before long he was leading with greater boldness. If you are not used to taking a stand for God in your role as a leader, do what you can as you ask God for help in growing you to do better. It may be baby steps at first, but as you continue to follow Him you will grow in your ability to confidently stand for Him.

**Start by Addressing the Problems Closest to Home.** So often we think of leadership as just pointing out things that others need to do. Yet Gideon's first job as leader was not about directing others, but about taking care of a problem closer to home – he had to remove the family idols. This example shows that before we are in a place to point out what others need to do, we must first make sure that we are attempting to live as we should – including removing the sin that is in our own house. Are there sins in your own life that you haven't repented of? Are there issues in your family that you have failed to lovingly yet unflinchingly address? Leadership starts with how we deal with issues within ourselves and those situations closest to us.

**Our Directions Must Come from God.** Gideon was able to lead only as he followed the directions that God gave him. If we men are to be godly leaders, we must know and live by what the Bible says. This means we need to make a habit of sitting under good Bible teaching and preaching. It also means that we need to personally read God's Word regularly and live by what we learn from it.

**Be Ready to Do the Unthinkable.** Contrary to what most military strategists would advise in such situations, God chose to par down the size of the Israelite army before they faced their enemies. "This is absolutely crazy," the people – including Gideon – possibly thought. But the plan worked. And so will whatever God leads you to do as you follow His direction..., even if everyone (including you) thinks that it is crazy.

**We Must Find Strength in God's Calling, Not Our Circumstances or Our Natural Abilities.** Gideon argued that he wasn't a good leader – that he was the last man that anyone would choose for the job. I've felt that way..., and I imagine most of you men have, too. But God has given us the roles of leadership in our families, our churches, and other places; and since He has called us to these roles, we can find the strength we need in Him.

**Be Careful that You Don't Distract Others from Focusing on God.** The Bible shows that Gideon was both a success and a failure in this area. On the one hand, he refused to let the people make him king, but he instead told them to focus on God as their king. Yet on the other hand, he made an ephod for himself. (This type of ephod was a special garment designed to be worn by the priests. It was through the ephod that God at times revealed His will.) This ephod that Gideon made became a distraction for the people, drawing their attention and commitment away from God. As God uses you as a leader, be careful to try to avoid those things that will cause others to be distracted from their focus on God.

**God Will Provide Assurance as You Are Faithful to Him.** A number of times (e.g. the dew on the fleece, the enemy's dream) God gave Gideon assurance that he was on the right track. My experience is that God still does the same thing today to those who are genuinely committed to Him. If you are committed to follow Him and need a little assurance of His help or His directions, just ask.

I am no longer in the fourth grade, but the pressure is still on – it's on me, and on you, too. All eyes are upon us. Others are looking to us to step up and provide the leadership in our families, at our jobs, in our churches, and more. Has God given you a role as leader – maybe a role that you feel as unfit for as Gideon did? The lessons of Gideon give us confidence to shoulder these God-given roles and become the leaders that God calls us to, and that the people in our world desperately need us to be. Men, may this be our challenge to man-up to the job God has given us – and may we *act like men* (1Cor 16:13) in accepting this challenge.