

Welcome to our five minute Leadership Blog. We are going to begin a little four part mini series on leading strong men and strong women.

Called to lead all

All of us are required as pastors to lead the weak, to lead those who are broken, to lead children, to lead those who society has discarded, but we're also mandated to lead the strong. A person's value is incalculable. Leading strong people isn't more important than leading weak people, but there is a uniqueness about leading strong people. God sends them to you to help them fulfill their purpose given under God, but also to help you. They're able to lead because they're stronger; they're able to lead sometimes thousands of other people with you.

Strong leaders require unique leadership

The way you lead a strong person is different. David, one of the greatest leaders of all time, was able to demonstrate that. He was very tender with widows and orphans, but when it came to leading strong men - he did that in a unique way.

There is a charming account in 1 Chronicles 12 of David who is on the run. He's not yet made king and is a fugitive from justice. He's hanging around in a fortress called Ziklag, Saul wants his blood, and in Chronicles 12 we see some disenchanted strong men with faces that look like lions, having seen some action and some trouble in their lifetimes. In addition to that they are able to throw a spear with the right hand and the left hand, the strongest was a match for a thousand and the weakest a match for a hundred. Those are the dudes that are strong men - and David led them in a unique way.

Lead by example

This is what he did to start with. It says they came to help him fight the battles he was fighting (1 Chronicles 12). In other words, David wasn't sitting in some lofty palace summoning people to do his dirty work for him: he had a sword in his one hand and a spear in the other hand; he had sweat coming from his brow; he was leading by example and calling them to come and stand shoulder to shoulder with him.

Lead by example. You're never going to leave a strong man sitting in some isolated place just giving him instructions.

One of the elements of leadership in our local church that I believe is absolutely critical is that of running a small group (a connect group). I hadn't run one for a little while, and I looked around my leadership team and I saw some really strong men choosing to lead things other than a small group. I immediately realised that what I needed to do was to model, even though I have a reasonably busy schedule, connect group leadership. I needed to do it in a way that demonstrated some courage. I led a connect group for atheists for a little while. Wasn't easy, didn't actually last too long; there was fruit but not a huge amount. What was I saying by doing this? I was saying "Come stand with me! Come lead unique groups, come grab people even if they're atheists, if they're broken, if they're strong - come and do church in a house with me!"

At the moment I am leading a connect group of university students. I like young people but this is quite hard work. They come in and invade my house. I'm doing it for a number of reasons: I want to get a heart for the young, politically sensitized students who are going to be the leaders of tomorrow. I want to understand them. In addition to that I want to demonstrate the virtue, value and centrality of discipleship in a home.

Lead with courage

The first thing we learn about leading strong men is that you lead by example. In addition to that, you've got to lead with courage. It says that David walked out to meet these men. Can you imagine that? He didn't have his bodyguards or army with him - he walked out and looked them in the eye. These are hundreds of men who are able to kill tens of thousands and David walks out alone. He probably wasn't even armed. He looks them in the eyes. A friend of mine says that leadership is the art of disguising terror. That doesn't mean being hypocritical. It simply means that sometimes, when everybody around you wants to sit down, you've got to go to the throne and ask God for the courage, will and strength to stand up and look the enemy in the eye; look the challenge in the eye and take charge.

Strong men are looking for courageous leaders. You might be flawed and not the most gifted, but if you plan to lead strong men, you've got to lean on God for courage. If courage doesn't come easily to you, you ask God for courage. He sends his Holy Spirit to encourage you and to fortify you.

Listen

He also asked them a question. He said to them, "Are you for me or against me?" and then he sat there and listened to them for a while before he received them. To lead strong men and women, you've got to listen to what they're saying. Listen to why they're saying it; listen to the reasons. Ask God to give you ears because it's not one size fits all for strong people, you've got to understand the background of what's going on.

Next week we will pick up the story of David again.