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Leaders Need to Lead

Courage to Lead Series

2 Samuel 10: 1-19

Pastor Bryan Clark

In the horse world we draw a distinction between someone who's actually riding a horse and someone who's merely being carried along as a passenger. If you go, for example, to Mahoney State Park and take the trail ride, which is lovely—nothing wrong with that—most people are merely passengers. The horse is going to start and stop when it wants. It's going to go the direction it wants. It's going to go the speed it wants. You're nothing more than a passenger. That's very different than actually riding a horse, where you've built a relationship of trust and you've made it very clear you're the leader. You influence when the horse starts, when it stops, which direction it goes, the speed it goes. It's a partnership but it needs to be very clear you're the leader because at the end of the day, that's what leaders do. They lead!

In our study of Samuel, we've defined leadership in very general terms. Anyone who is serious about being a Christ-follower desires to influence others for Christ. But it's good to remind ourselves that if you're going to take this calling seriously, you *are* actually influencing others for Christ. If we were to change the metaphor just a little bit, let's move from horses to a bus and we're going to call it the culture bus. The bus is filled with people in the culture traveling the wide path. It's important to understand our calling as Christians is not to just be a nice passenger on the culture bus. You know, the standard of naughty and nice may be fine for Santa Claus but God calls you to something much more. It is to influence people on the culture bus to consider getting off that bus and traveling a narrow path that ultimately leads to an encounter with the resurrected Christ—that their soul may experience what their soul longs for. It seems to me, in our culture there are Christians who have become a little bit confused about this. I think it's a reaction to the rigid, separated fundamentalists of the past. So, as often happens, the pendulum swings too far the other way. We've identified that the most important thing about a Christian is *love*, which I think is biblically true. But then we have a rather odd definition of love. We've convinced ourselves, in the name of love, that we shouldn't judge anyone; we shouldn't criticize anyone; we shouldn't make anyone feel uncomfortable about their behavior. Therefore, in the name of Christian love, it's our duty to help everyone feel good about their behavior, no matter what it is. So we are passengers on the culture bus and we have determined that to be nice on the culture bus, we help the other passengers. We offer them a beverage; we get them a warm blanket; we offer them a pillow. We want them to be as comfortable as they can be on the culture bus because that's *love*. I would suggest to you that isn't loving at all. As Christians we know something, and what we know is that that bus is traveling the wide path and ultimately that bus goes off a cliff and those people perish! To know that and do nothing more than to make them feel comfortable on that bus is not love. I would call it apathy or a form of indifference. If you care even a little bit for the people on that bus, wouldn't we, knowing what we know, be motivated to influence them to consider getting off that bus and traveling the narrow path which leads to life?

We need to remind ourselves again this morning that this calling we have as Christians goes far beyond just being good or being nice. It's about being a leader. It's about influencing others for the sake of the gospel. The stakes are very, very high. Throughout our Samuel series, we have looked at four primary leaders. Stop and think about how dramatically different life was under each of these

leaders. We looked at Eli—not so good. We looked at Samuel—better. We looked at Saul—not so good. We looked at David—much better. There's this mysterious thing about God. God is sovereign; God can do whatever he wants. He can intervene in any way he wants. We learned in 1 Samuel 5 that God doesn't need an army; he doesn't need a king; he doesn't need a leader. He defeated the Philistines all by Himself and yet historically, God seems to limit His action according to the choices of His people. And often it's according to the choices of His leaders. In the Samuel story it's the same basic geographical piece of land, same basic ethnic people, same God. But think about how dramatically different life was under Saul. Thousand and thousands and thousands of people's lives were affected by the decisions Saul made, and how dramatically different life was under David because of the choices David made. So we are reminded this morning that leadership matters, and if your calling is to influence others for the sake of the gospel, we have to have the courage to lead. That's what we want to talk about this morning.

If you have a Bible, turn with us to 2 Samuel, Chapter 10. This is considered to be the last chapter of the middle section of 2 Samuel. The middle section is really kind of about these big themes that define the reign of David. They're not meant to be chronological. It's not meant to imply that one story follows another. They're more like snapshots that are organized thematically. So this is the last one in the middle section and in the next chapter, which we will get to in January, the storyline changes dramatically. So in chapter 8 we saw what we referred to as a *Catalog of Victories*—that what David accomplished, not because of his skill but because of his faith, was quite remarkable. God allowed him to build an empire. He called a nation back to worshiping their God and he sought to administer justice and righteousness, creating what the Old Testament refers to as *shalom*, creating a context where the people could flourish together in the land of promise. There's probably been no time before or since where the Hebrew people ever flourished like they did under David—so quite a remarkable time. Chapter 9 is kind of the micro-perspective—what does this look like in a real specific way? And we saw David's kindness to Mephibosheth. So now, one more time in chapter ten, what does this look like as David seeks to protect and maintain the *shalom*, the *flourishing* that God has allowed. Chapter 10, verse 1:

> **Now it happened afterwards that the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son became king in his place. Then David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me."** (*NASB, 2 Samuel 1:1-2a)

So let's just stop there and do a little bit of history. If you've been with us in our Samuel series, you've already met Nahash. He first showed up in 1 Samuel, chapter 11, right after Saul became king. Nahash and the Ammonites invaded Jabesh-Gilead. The Ammonites would have been just east of the Jordan River, about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. So they cross over the river and they attack Jabesh-Gilead. If you remember the story, the elders of Jabesh-Gilead said to Nahash, "Tell you what, we'll just roll over; we'll surrender; we'll be your slaves; just don't kill us." Nahash said, "Okay, I'll agree to that under one condition: we gouge out the right eye of every male." So the elders of the city said, "I'll tell you what, let us talk about it. Give us a week; we'll let you know." Nahash allows that because he sees no possibility that Jabesh-Gilead can muster any kind of a force against him. So word gets to Saul—this is Saul's first big test—and Saul immediately moves into action. He cuts up an ox into pieces and sends the bloody pieces out to the tribes of Israel with a little message that says basically, "This is what I'll do to you if you don't help." So the nation of Israel came out in force and Nahash was defeated and the Ammonites went back into their land. Samuel worshipped God. Saul entered into the worship. The nation came together as one, and I referred to it as *Saul's finest hour*. It was just a glimpse of what was possible if Saul would have trusted God.

So that was our introduction to Nahash. Exactly when David encountered Nahash is unknown but most scholars think it was while he was a fugitive fleeing for his life because Saul wanted to kill him. So because of the conflict between David and Saul, Nahash viewed David as an ally. So David would have been a fugitive, would have been no risk to Nahash, but Nahash for whatever reason extended kindness—hesed—what we talked about last week to David. So now David is king; David is running an empire and Nahash has died and the honest motivation of David's heart is simply to extend sympathy to Nahash's son because Nahash had been kind to him.

> **So David sent some of his servants to console him concerning his father. But when David's servants came to the land of the Ammonites, the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think that David is honoring your father because he has sent consolers to you? Has David not sent his servants to you in order to search the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?" So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away. When they told *it* to David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, "Stay at Jericho until your beards grow, and then return."** (Vs. 2a-5)

So David, in all sincerity, wants to simply console Hanun on the loss of his father. But Hanun's advisors think David's up to something. He's secretly spying out the city because he's going to attack and destroy them. So, in return, they humiliate David's servants. The English isn't real clear; the Hebrew is quite clear. They did not shorten the beards; they cut off half of the beard. So half of the face was cleanly shaven; the other half was still bearded, in an act of humiliation. The English is a little bit more reserved in talking about the garment being cut up at the hips. The Hebrew is very exact—halfway through the buttocks. So basically it was intended to be a total humiliation of David's servants, so much so that word reaches David and David, out of compassion for his men, encourages them to stop in Jericho, which was partway home, and, "Just stay there. Get a new garment; wait until your beard grows out, and then come the rest of the way home."

Now I find this part of the story very helpful. If I'm going to be serious about seeking to influence others off the culture bus, one of the things I have to understand is: it is likely—almost a guarantee—that from time to time I'm going to be misunderstood. I'm going to be falsely accused; people are going to say I'm up to something I'm really not up to. Why is that? The answer is: because everyone views the world through the lens of his or her worldview. That's just the way it is. So regardless of what *my* worldview is, regardless of what my motives are, people are going to view my actions through the lens of *their own* worldview. So the advisors to Hanun, because of their own worldview, because of the wickedness of their own heart, because when they look inside their own hearts, they know what they see. They know that they would disadvantage others if they could get away with it to advantage themselves, so simply do not have a worldview to process that David could actually be acting out of genuine compassion and kindness. They believe that because they themselves do not have the capacity within their own heart to act that way. It's very helpful to realize that when you are seeking to influence others and they respond in a way that's hurtful, it's actually exposing what's in their own heart. They look through their own worldview and they process your actions through their own view. If they're selfish, if they're self-centered, if they're greedy, if they would disadvantage others to advantage themselves, they simply lack a worldview to accurately process what you actually did for them. Therefore they think you're up to something; they think you have ulterior motives. So part of what you have to just accept is no matter what my motives are, people are going to view my actions through the grid of their own worldview. Don't

expect it to be fair. That's why it takes courage. That's why it takes skill. So Hanun sends David's servants back in a humiliated state. Verse 6:

> **Now when the sons of Ammon saw that they had become odious to David, the sons of Ammon sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob with 12,000 men. When David heard of *it,* he sent Joab and all the army, the mighty men. The sons of Ammon came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the city, while the Arameans of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah *were* by themselves in the field.** (Vs. 6-8)

So the Ammonites figure out that they have become odious in the nostrils of David and, in their worldview, David's going to get them. So they hire mercenaries from among the Arameans and they put the troops out for battle. I do think it's worth noting, David does not muster the troops until the Ammonites come out in full force to fight. Again, to take the language of *shalom*, David as king of an empire is administering justice and righteousness so that all people can flourish together in the kingdom. But there's always going to be those, because of their bent toward evil, who will seek to do violence to *shalom* and part of being serious about *flourishing* is realizing you have to have the courage and the skill to respond to that. So David sees the Ammonites come out in full force and responds with his troops and with Joab.

> **Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him in front and in the rear, he selected from all the choice men of Israel, and arrayed *them* against the Arameans. But the remainder of the people he placed in the hand of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed *them* against the sons of Ammon. He said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the sons of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come to help you. Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight." So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to the battle against the Arameans, and they fled before him. When the sons of Ammon saw that the Arameans fled, they *also* fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from *fighting* against the sons of Ammon and came to Jerusalem.** (Vs 9-14)

So most of that is tactical. The opposing army is on the North and South so Joab divides his army between the North and the South. But I think the relevant point is what comes out of the mouth of Joab in verse 12. Joab makes quite a remarkable statement, "**Be strong. Let us show ourselves courageous."** What for? **"For the sake of our people..."** to protect *shalom*...**"and for the cities of our God and may the LORD do what is good in his sight."**

Now this isn't coming out of the mouth of David. This is coming out of the mouth of Joab. Last time we saw Joab, he was a bit of a thug. He killed Abner in cold blood and put the entire nation at risk. You remember the nation was this close to more bloody civil war because of the actions of Joab. Something has dramatically changed. Joab now is acting courageously on behalf of the people. He now wants to please God. He is trusting the Lord with his actions. What has happened? Answer: David has happened. David has influenced the people. David has influenced Joab, his commander. He is a different man. He is a different leader reflected in his statement here. It's just again a snapshot of the influence of David as a godly leader.

When the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. And Hadadezer sent and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the River, and they came to Helam; and Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer led them. Now when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Arameans arrayed themselves to meet David and fought against him. But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed 700 charioteers of the Arameans and 40,000 horsemen and struck down Shobach the commander of their army, and he died there. 19 When all the kings, servants of Hadadezer, saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Arameans feared to help the sons of Ammon anymore.
(Vs. 15-19)

So the Arameans flee; the Ammonties are losing; they recruit King *Had* with his troops. It must have been a significant battle because David actually comes out and joins as commander but God gives them a great victory. What happens then at the end is critical. The result is that there was **peace**. The text uses our Hebrew word *shalom* in the land again. And because of the actions of David and the army, the Ammonites and the Arameans decide not to violate *shalom* again. What you have is a reminder that in a sin-fallen world, it's not realistic to think you can go out there, be all nice, and it's heaven on earth and you basically cruise on into the sunset. There will always be people seeking to do violence to *shalom*. It flows out of their own worldview, how they see the world. It flows out of their determination to be selfish and self-centered and to disadvantage others to advantage themselves. So *shalom* wasn't something where David just could sit in the palace and twiddle his thumbs. He had to continually be courageous and fight to protect the *flourishing* of his people. So the text says, as a result of David's action, once again there was *flourishing* in the land, and Ammon and the Arameans would not violate it again.

Again, it's just a picture of the courage of a leader seeking to be faithful to what God has called him to do. What David accomplished is remarkable. This middle section is just this wonderful picture of what God did through David to provide *flourishing* in the land. Starting in chapter eleven, the story will change dramatically—and we'll get to that in January.

As far as what does this have to do with us today? There is a reminder that leaders need to lead. It's what leaders do. They seek to influence others for the kingdom. It's simply not enough to just be a passenger on the culture bus. It's not enough in the name of Christian love to just be nice on the culture bus. The naughty and nice standard works for Santa Claus; it doesn't work for God. You've been called to something far more than that. You've been called to have the skill, to have the kindness, to have the courage to be a leader—to actually influence people off the culture bus, down the narrow path that leads to a meaningful encounter with the resurrected Christ, to experience the life that their souls long for! To know that the culture bus is headed down the wide path and that it will ultimately go off a cliff and those people will be destroyed; to know that and to do nothing to get those people off the bus is not loving. It's a form of apathy or indifference.

Now at this point it would be easy to say, "You know, that's a good reminder, Pastor Clark. You know we're with you on this. Praise the Lord. Amen. Let's go home," because in my experience, most Christians think they're doing this. Most Christians wouldn't look in the mirror and say, "Yeah, that's me, I'm apathetical, I'm indifferent, I don't really care." I don't know too many Christians that take that position. But it's easy to *think* I'm being a leader. But who are you actually influencing? So let's get real specific with this before we go home for the day. If I was to ask you to list the names of three specific people in the last year that you have influenced off the culture bus,

down the narrow path to encounter a life-changing relationship with Christ, could you do that? I'll give you a second right now—all three names. You say, "Well, I don't have three." "Okay, well two." "Well, I don't have two." "Well, okay, one." "Well, you know a year is kind of a short time frame." "Okay, how about the last three years? How about the last five years? How about the last ten years?" It's easy to start thinking as long as I'm out there being nice, being a good Christian—you know, I'm a passenger on the culture bus and I've offered people a pillow and a blanket and a beverage, "Have a nice ride," —that somehow that's adequate. It's not adequate! How could we know what we know without saying something? At some point you have to kind of assess: Am I actually influencing others for Christ? As the old saying goes, "The leader that is out leading and no one is following is merely taking a walk." Who are you actually influencing for Christ? The most profound Christmas present you could give to anyone is to say, "I so believe the life-changing message of Christmas, and I care so much about you, I would just like to share it with you!" Is it easy? It's not...it's not! That's why it takes courage to lead!

Our Father, we are reminded this Christmas season that Jesus left the glories of heaven in order to become a baby and then a man, in order to die a cruel death on the cross to offer salvation to the people we rub shoulders with every single day. God, how can we know this...how can we know this and not tell them? God, raise up leaders with kindness, with compassion and courage who will share the good news of Jesus! In His name we pray, Amen.

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Opening Discussion

1. Have you ever been in a situation where "leaders" weren't willing to lead? How did you feel? What was the result? Is leadership a noun (title) or a verb (action)?

2. Is the calling of a Christian primarily to make everyone feel good about themselves or to influence others to pursue a relationship with Jesus? What has happened that has caused so many Christians to believe that love means helping people be comfortable riding on the culture bus? Is that leadership? Why or why not?

3. If the Bible is clear that the culture bus is headed down a road where we know the bridge is out what would be the loving thing to do? What are the risks of doing this?

Bible Study

1. Review the leadership stories of I and II Samuel so far (Eli, Samuel, Saul, David). Why does leadership matter?

2. Read II Samuel 10:1-19. What motivated David's behavior at the beginning of the chapter? How is David's action consistent with Shalom?

3. Why do you think Hanun and his princes acted as they did? What do we learn from this? Will people always respond well to kindness that is well-intended? Why or why not?

4. Is David's response in conflict with Shalom or consistent with the idea of Shalom? Explain.

5. Compare Joab's comments to what we knew about him previously (chapters 2, 3). How has David's influence effected Joab?

6. What was the result of David's leadership and action according to 10:19? What does this teach us if we're serious about creating pockets of shalom?

Application

1. Are you leading? Where?

2. It's easy for Christians to say they are influencing others for Christ but what is the evidence. Whom have you actually effected? List three names. What is the evidence that these people have been effected?

3. If you were to be truly honest, are you more likely to lean toward helping people feel comfortable on the culture bus or more likely to take the risk of leadership and seek to influence people off the bus and down the path of life?

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