

Way of Discipleship Small Groups Leadership in the Old Testament



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

How do leaders in the Old Testament help people obey God's will?



Understanding the information (40 minutes)

Read through, or summarize, the three page handout, looking at types of leaders in the Old Testament, examples of Old Testament leaders, and the two main images of leadership - shepherd and servant.



Discuss: What can we apply today about leading as a priest, judge, king or prophet?

What can't we apply?

Which Old Testament leader most inspires you? Why?

What does it mean to lead like a shepherd?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Isaiah 42: 1-4 - the first of the "servant songs" in Isaiah.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:

What does this passage teach me about God?

What does this passage teach me about people?

How does this passage call me to obey God?

What might I do in response to this this week?



Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

There is no video, but you are invited to discuss your experience of how leadership is being a servant.



Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

LORD, I have heard of your fame;
I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD.
Renew them in our day, in our time make them known;
in wrath remember mercy...
yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Saviour.
The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to go on the heights.



From Habakkuk 3

TYPES OF OT LEADERS AND THEIR PURPOSE

PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS WHOM GOD CALLS.

Provision of leadership is seen both in the way that God directly calls, for example, Abraham, to initiate His purposes in specific ways, and in the general establishing of structures to oversee society e.g. Jethro's advice to Moses in Exodus 18 to "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."

PRIESTS

Priests were set apart to be able to "come near" to God (Numbers 16: 5) – they represented God's holiness, communicated His Law to the people, and represented the people to God through the offering of worship and sacrifice.

JUDGES

The earliest formal leadership in Israel, exercising God's good rule through ensuring the right ordering of relationships in society – helping those suffering injustice and upholding cause of the needy.



KINGS

Anointed by God as a concession to His people who had proved unable to accept His direct appointment of leaders, kings are celebrated as bringing stability (By justice a king gives a country stability, but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down. Proverbs 29:4), caring for the people (And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them. Psalm 78:72) and ensuring they thrive (When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan. Proverbs 29:2).

PROPHETS

As opposed to those who rule by appointment or birthright (kings and priests), prophets are raised directly by God to call His people back to His ways of righteousness and justice).



EXAMPLES OF OT LEADERS AND WHAT THEIR STORIES REVEAL

LEADERSHIP IS EXPLORED THROUGH STORY AND EXAMPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Noah:

Leadership as obedience to God alone.

Abraham:

Leadership as responding to God's call and embracing the unknown.

GENESIS 12: "GO FORTH FROM YOUR COUNTRY, AND FROM YOUR RELATIVES AND FROM YOUR FATHER'S HOUSE, TO THE LAND WHICH I WILL SHOW YOU."

Joseph:

Leadership as having a vision to endure through hard circumstances and showing grace. Joseph forgave his brothers' mistreatment of him (Genesis 50). "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good..." (Genesis 50:20).

Moses:

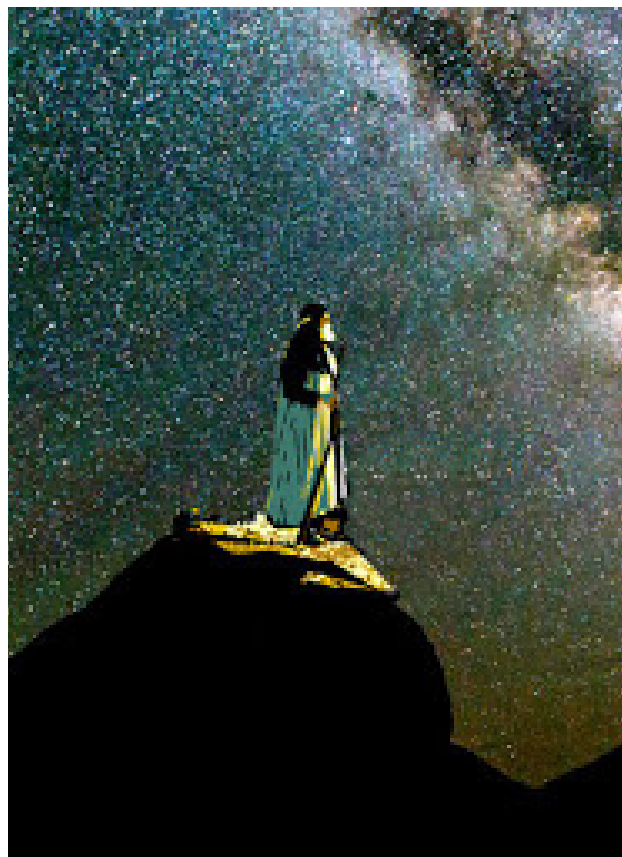
Leadership as taking responsibility for people.

Moses and Joshua:

Leadership as ensuring succession. The succession of Joshua to Moses begins with Joshua taking orders from Moses (Exodus 7), being an aide (Exodus 24), exhibiting confidence in the face of challenges (Numbers 14), transitioning to partial leadership (Numbers 27), receiving a commission and blessing (Deuteronomy 34), and assuming full leadership (Joshua 1).

Joshua:

Leadership as exercised by example rather than command. Joshua 24: "But as for me and my house," he says, "we will serve the Lord." The people follow, inspired by his example.



David:

Leadership as defeating giants through trusting in God's power, and as knowing when to let wrongs go. "Leave him alone; let him curse..." (2 Samuel 16:11).

Solomon:

Leadership as exercising wisdom. He sought "a discerning heart to govern... and to distinguish right from wrong." (1 Kings 3:9).

Esther:

Leadership as knowing when to act with courage. "...you have come to your royal position for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14).

Isaiah:

Leadership as taking the initiative before others. "Here am I. Send me!"

Daniel:

Leadership as maintaining resolve.

Nehemiah:

Leadership as casting God's vision.



TWO KEY OLD TESTAMENT LEADERSHIP IMAGES

LEADER AS SHEPHERD.

A widely used image in the ancient world for leadership. This reflects God as the one as, "He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd." Jeremiah 31:10.

God promises his people in Ezekiel 37:24 a leader who will "be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd."

At a time when shepherds would be personally liable for lost sheep and would know them individually, the image speaks of leadership which is self-sacrificial and concerned for the well-being and protection of the flock.

It is taken up by Jesus as the "Good Shepherd", in the commissioning of Peter as one who will "feed my sheep" and as one of the five gifts of leadership given to the church in Ephesians 4.



LEADER AS SERVANT.

Possibly the most significant symbol for leadership in the Bible and Christian religion.

It is one of the most widely used in OT, marking leaders who put others and God's will above themselves.

It is not related to status - both the highest and lowest in society can be servant-leaders.

It's a mark of true kingship - Rehoboam ignores the advice of the elders to "be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favourable answer." (1 Kings 12:7)

The Servant in Isaiah (40-55) is the one on whom Jesus bases the understanding of His ministry. Neil Cole writes,

"SERVANTHOOD IS NOT AN ADJECTIVE TO DESCRIBE A GOOD LEADER AS IF IT IS ONE OF THE MANY QUALITIES OF A GOOD LEADER. SERVANTHOOD IS WHAT WE NEED, EVEN MORE THAN LEADERSHIP. LEADERSHIP IS JUST A FUNCTION FOR THE SERVANT."

