

A Real Man Would . . . Lead

Pastor Matthew Ude

June 22, 2025

Judges 15:9-20 ⁹ Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. ¹⁰ And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us." ¹¹ Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." ¹² But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines." Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves." ¹³ So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. ¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that *were* on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. ¹⁵ He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. ¹⁶ Then Samson said: "With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!" ¹⁷ And so it was,

when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi. ¹⁸ Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" ¹⁹ So God split the hollow place that *is* in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. ²⁰ And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

Since we are talking about manly men, we have to talk about probably the manliest man of scripture, Samson. Samson is the ultimate example of what we might consider a real man. He was strong. He was a conqueror. He didn't let anyone push him around. When he felt that people wronged him, he took his revenge. Once when he lost a bet, he killed thirty to repay his debt he was a commander and a judge in Israel for about 20 years before he met Delilah.

By every earthly standard he was a great leader, a real man. He was someone that we might think we want to imitate. Yet in so many ways he was a failure as a leader. We see that in our text. Despite his great strength, the people of Judah were not willing to follow Samson. Instead, they gave him over to the Philistines.

That is the heart of our sermon today. That difference between being a great warrior and being a great leader. God has called

us to leadership not to dictatorship. Leadership means service, example and Christ.

What was wrong with Samson's form of leadership?

First, he used his gifts to serve himself rather than to serve others. God gave him his great strength for the purpose of freeing the Israelite people from the Philistines. Samson only bothered to fight the Philistines when he felt they had wronged him personally. He used his strength to get revenge for himself rather than to serve.

Romans 12:4-6 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:

Being a good leader means using the gifts God has given to us to serve one another, instead of serving ourselves

Men, God has called you to be leaders, each one of you. You are called to be leaders in the family and in the church. Some to a greater degree and others to a less degree, but each of you is called to leadership.

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

In our sinfulness we often have a very skewed perspective on what being a leader means. Like Samson we tend to use our leadership to serve ourselves rather than to serve others. We have a tendency to be either overbearing, "Woman do what I tell you," or lax and lazy in our duties, "Do whatever you want I don't care."

God has called us neither to be tyrants nor to laziness. He has called us to leadership, and leadership means humble service. Being a leader doesn't mean telling others what to do, it means being the first one to do what needs to be done.

Last week we were reminded how being a real man means be Christ like in humility. Today we apply that same humility to leadership. Being a man means that God has called you to be leaders, but leaders in humility.

Because we so often fail we look to Jesus. We look to Jesus both as an example for us and for the forgiveness he offers.

Matthew 20:25-28 25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 "And

**whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave--
28 "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to
serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

Jesus serves us by forgiving our failure in leadership. He serves us by dying for our sins. He leads by service and sets an example for us

Leadership means being an example.

Second, Samson failed as a leader because he was not a good example. His attitude was to do what he wanted when he wanted. God told him not to touch any dead thing. He ate honey from a lion carcass. God told him not to drink alcohol. He went to party it up with the philistines.

God has called you not to be commanders or generals but leaders. The key difference is right there in the word, a leader leads, a commander commands. We often act as though the terms commander and leader are synonyms. Nothing could be further from the truth. A commander gives orders. A leader sets an example. A commander uses his words. A leader uses his actions. The preschool students know what a leader is, the leader is the one in front of the line, not the one in back telling everyone what to do.

God has called you to be leaders but not commanders

A great example of a leader is not Samson but Joshua.

Joshua 24:15 "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

He led by example and by putting God first in all things. Samson was one who didn't let anyone not even God tell him what to do. Joshua was an example of following God.

Once again, we see Jesus both as an example and as the offering for our failure.

Hebrews 4:15-16 NKJ 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus is our leader. He is our Good Shepherd. What a great good shepherd he is. He didn't send us to the front lines to fight. He himself came down from heaven and he himself was tempted greater than we are. He didn't send us to die, he himself entered death ahead of us. Through his death he leads us through death into life. We have failed to be the leaders that

we should be but Jesus has taken our place under the law. He did what we could not.

Samson was strong, stronger than any other man, physically but his strength failed him. Real strength doesn't come from our muscles. Real strength comes from Christ.

**Isaiah 40:30-31 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But those who wait
on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up
with wings like eagles,**

God has called you to leadership. The leadership of service and example. Even when we fail to be the leaders we should Jesus our leader took our place, forgives our sins and strengthens us through his word. Amen