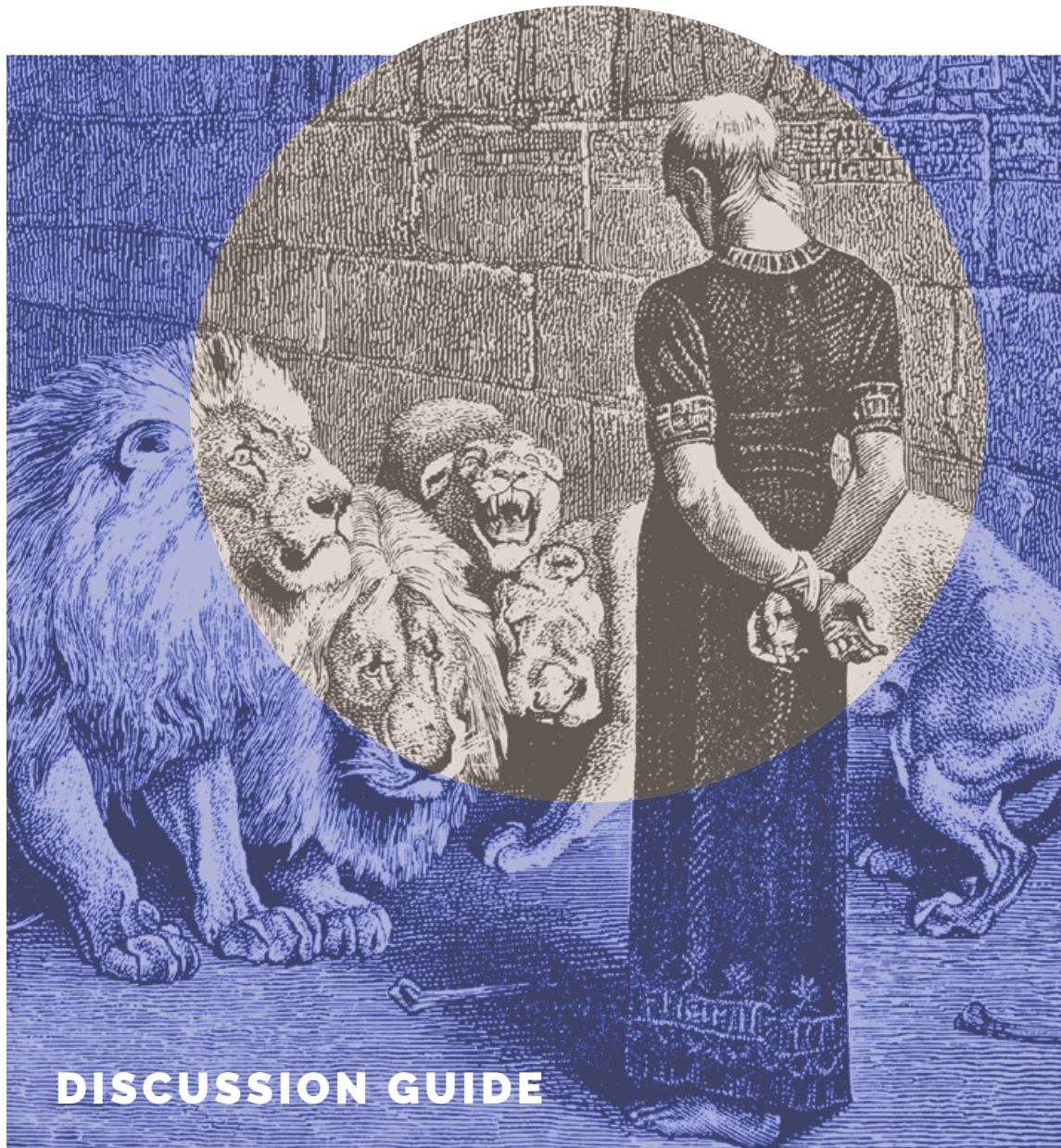


MAKE IT **COUNT**

A ten-week study for leadership teams by *Influence* magazine

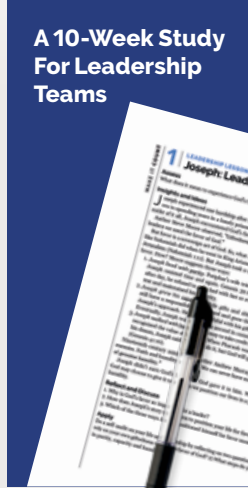
Avoiding Ministry Pitfalls: Lessons From 10 Biblical Leaders

By STEPHEN BLANDINO



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A 10-Week Study For Leadership Teams

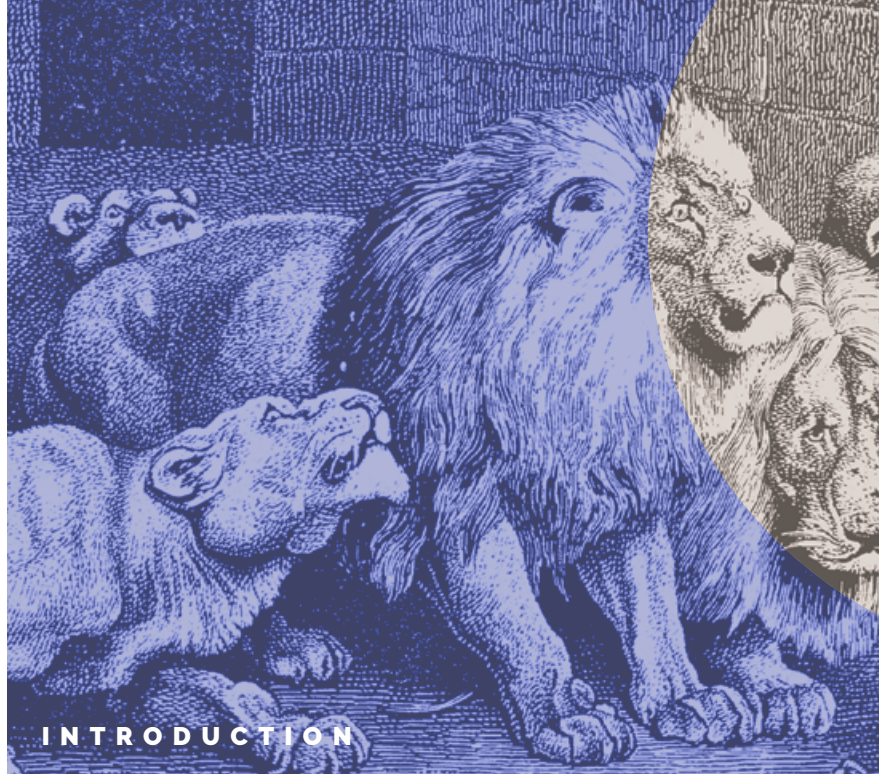


What Is Make It Count?

Make It Count is a leadership development resource for use individually or with staff, volunteers, or board members.

Each installment is also available online as a downloadable PDF, along with interactive pages for group member use. The underlined words and phrases in the following text correspond to fill-in-the-blank sections on team member pages. Access these free resources at influencemagazine.com/Downloads.

These lessons are written by Stephen Blandino, lead pastor of 7 City Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and the author of several books.



Avoiding Ministry Pitfalls: Lessons From 10 Biblical Leaders

By **STEPHEN BLANDINO**

According to research conducted by author Steve Moore, there are 1,181 leaders named in the Bible, and more than 13,000 others who are mentioned but not named. In addition, Moore notes there are 1,090 leadership conversations in Scripture.

J. Robert Clinton suggests that of the biblical leaders on whom we have enough information to follow their lives, approximately two-thirds did not finish well.

What lessons can we learn from the leaders in the Bible — whether they finished well or not? That's the focus of this edition of Make It Count.



We'll look at 10 biblical leaders and consider lessons we can glean from each of them.

1. **Joseph: Leading With God's Favor.** Though Joseph was tossed from one hardship to another, he experienced God's favor. Favor is a sovereign act of God, but it is also something Joseph learned to position himself for throughout his lifetime.
2. **Joshua: Leading With Perspective.** Joshua and Caleb were the only leaders who returned to Moses with a good report after exploring the land of Canaan. Forty years later, that same perspective gave Joshua the courage to lead God's people into the Promised Land.
3. **Deborah: Leading With Resolve.** God used Deborah to help lead Israel to a military victory. Afterward, Deborah praised God, saying, "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves — praise the

Lord!" (Judges 5:2). Leaders lead in the face of opposition.

4. **Nehemiah: Leading With Vision.** When Nehemiah heard about the condition of Jerusalem and its people, God birthed a vision in his heart to return and rebuild the wall.
5. **Esther: Leading With Courage.** Esther had every reason not to leverage her position for the rescue of her people. Yet Esther ditched the excuses and courageously took action that would lead to their deliverance.
6. **Daniel: Leading With Cultural Influence.** Daniel was an outsider, but God gave him great influence under four different kings. By modeling commitment, character, competence, courage and consistency, Daniel positively influenced the culture of his day.
7. **Mary: Leading Through Devotion.** Mary of Bethany led through devotion at the feet of Jesus. In that posture, Mary learned from Jesus, found comfort in Him, and offered worship to Him.
8. **Priscilla and Aquila: Leading Through Partnership.** The apostle Paul described Priscilla and Aquila as "co-workers in Christ" (Romans 16:3). This couple understood that leading through partnership provides encouragement, support and the ability to multiply ministry.
9. **Peter: Leading Through Failure.** Although Peter experienced multiple failures throughout his ministry with Jesus, the Lord restored Peter. Effective leaders choose to own their failures, learn from them, and lead through them.
10. **Paul: Leading Through Hardship.** Paul endured countless difficulties and intense persecution, but he never quit. Paul's example teaches us the value of endurance in leadership.

As you read, reflect on, and apply these lessons with your team, you'll harvest insights that will equip you to lead effectively and avoid common pitfalls in leadership.

1

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Joseph: Leading With God's Favor

Assess

What does it mean to experience God's favor in leadership?

Insights and Ideas

Joseph experienced one hardship after another. From being sold into slavery by his brothers to spending years in a lonely prison, Joseph's life was filled with suffering. Yet, in the midst of it all, Joseph encountered God's favor.

Author Steve Moore observed, "Giftedness and training are not enough; to be effective as leaders we need the favor of God."

But favor is a sovereign act of God. So, what can we do about it? Some people pray for favor, like Nehemiah did when he went to King Artaxerxes with his vision to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:11). But Joseph took a different approach. He *positioned* himself for favor. How? Moore suggests three ways:

1. *Joseph lived with purity.* Potiphar's wife tried to convince Joseph to sleep with her, but Joseph resisted time and again. Genesis 39:10 says, "Though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her." Joseph passed the purity test and maintained his integrity.
2. *Joseph grew his capacity.* While gifts and abilities are not enough in leadership, we still have a responsibility to steward and grow those gifts to their full capacity. That was Joseph's approach. He proved faithful with his gifts, and God honored Joseph because of it. Eventually, Joseph was elevated to second in command over Egypt.
3. *Joseph walked with humility.* It's easy to take credit for our leadership results, but Joseph recognized the value of humility. When Pharaoh was searching for someone to interpret his dream, Joseph said, "I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires" (Genesis 41:16).

Nineteenth-century minister and writer Andrew Murray once said, "Faith and pride are enemies. Faith and humility are allies. We can never have more of genuine faith than we have of genuine humility."

Joseph didn't earn God's favor, but God gave it to him. We need God's favor today, and God may choose to give it to us when we position our lives in a posture of purity, capacity and humility.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Why is God's favor so important for a leader?
2. How does Joseph's story inspire you to position your life for favor?
3. Which of the three ways Joseph positioned himself for favor most speaks to you? Why?

Apply

Do a self-audit on your life and leadership by reflecting on two questions: 1) How much do you rely on your own giftedness versus the favor of God? 2) What steps do you need to take to grow in purity, capacity and humility?

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"Giftedness and training are not enough; to be effective as leaders we need the favor of God." — Steve Moore

How Joseph positioned himself for God's favor:

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"Though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her" (Genesis 39:10).

2. *Joseph grew his* _____.

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Apply

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2

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Joshua: Leading With Perspective

Team Review

What did you learn as you reflected on positioning your life in a posture that attracts the favor of God?

Assess

How does having the right perspective impact your effectiveness as a leader?

Insights and Ideas

One of the most important qualities of a leader is perspective. Author Bobby Clinton once said, “The difference between leaders and followers is perspective. The difference between leaders and effective leaders is better perspective.”

How you see is always more important than what you see.

Joshua understood the value of perspective. When the 12 spies came back to Moses with their report after spending 40 days exploring the land of Canaan, they described the beauty and bounty of the land. However, 10 of the spies also said, “But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large” (Numbers 13:28).

Then, when Joshua and Caleb wanted to take the land, the 10 spies countered, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are. ... We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them” (Numbers 13:31,33).

What’s the value of having the right perspective in leadership? Consider three benefits:

1. *The right perspective helps us glean lessons.* When we find ourselves in difficult situations, it’s easy to become so focused on getting out of them that we fail to get anything from them. Our perspective becomes skewed, and we lose the lesson in the middle of our loathing. The giant might be *what you see*, but *how you see it* determines whether you seize the opportunity before you.
2. *The right perspective increases our faith in God.* A.W. Tozer believed a low view of God is the cause of a hundred lesser evils, but a high view of God is the solution to 10,000 temporal problems. In other words, our biggest problem may not be what we see, but how we see it.
3. *The right perspective helps us make better decisions.* Rather than being reactionary in our decision making, perspective helps us see further and respond with greater wisdom. It gives us the insight to seek long-term solutions rather than short-term relief.

This kind of perspective gave Joshua what he would need to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land after Moses’ death.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What most strikes you about the story of the 12 spies?
2. How have you allowed your perspective of your problems to skew your perspective of God?
3. Brainstorm three ways you and your team can gain better perspective in leadership.

Apply

Create two columns. In one column, list the qualities of a problem-focused perspective; in the other, list the qualities of a God-focused perspective. Then, read the God-focused perspective each morning for the next 30 days. As you do, reflect on how it impacts your view of God and leadership.

2

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Three benefits of the right perspective:

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When we find ourselves in difficult situations, it’s easy to become so focused on getting out of them that we fail to get anything from them.

2. *The right perspective increases our* _____ *in God.*

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3

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Deborah: Leading With Resolve

Team Review

How is your outlook improving as you read the qualities of a God-focused perspective?

Assess

What's the hardest part of leadership for you?

Insights and Ideas

Deborah was a judge and prophet. In Judges 4:6–7, she delivered this message to Barak, son of Abinoam: “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulum and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.’”

Deborah didn’t just sit on the sidelines, however. She ultimately stepped into battle, and Jabin, king of Canaan, was destroyed.

After this victory, Deborah rejoiced with song: “When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves — praise the Lord!” (Judges 5:2).

Leaders lead when the pressure is on. This is especially important in three critical moments:

1. *Leaders lead in the face of fear.* Author Clay Scroggins observed, “Every time we respond in fear, we miss an opportunity to lead, and this failure of leadership is an issue of identity.” Deborah’s identity was established in the Lord, and with bold resolve, she entered the battle and led in the face of fear.
2. *Leaders lead in the face of pain.* Author and consultant Sam Chand says, “You’ll grow only to the threshold of your pain.” That means when you face difficult and painful decisions, you have to lean forward and lead forward. That’s what Deborah did. Despite the pain associated with battle, Deborah chose to boldly lead as she told Barak, “Go!” (Judges 4:14).
3. *Leaders lead in the face of battle.* Deborah said to Barak, “This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?” (Judges 4:14). With that, 10,000 warriors followed them to the battle. When it was over, not a single member of the enemy army was left alive (Judges 4:16).

We are in a spiritual battle, and when faced with resistance and opposition, leaders do not retreat or relinquish the victory. They lead when the stakes are high, looking to the Lord to give them the victory.

John Maxwell often says, “Leaders don’t have two good days in a row.” Whether good or bad, leaders lead every day. They step up and step out, and they steward their leadership for the good of others and the glory of God.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What does the statement “leaders lead” mean to you?
2. In which situation is it hardest for you to lead: in fear, pain or spiritual battles? Why?
3. In what area of your ministry have you been hesitant to lead with courage?

Apply

Take a moment to pinpoint the area where you need to stand up and step out to lead. Then, determine the first step you’ll take to lead forward, and when you’ll take it. Finally, pray and commit to follow God’s lead in this critical moment.

3

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Deborah: Leaders Lead

Assess

What's the hardest part of leadership for you?

Deborah was a judge and prophet. In Judges 4:6–7, she delivered this message to Barak, son of Abinoam: “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulum and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.’”

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When you face difficult and painful decisions, you have to lean forward and lead forward. That’s what Deborah did.

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When faced with resistance and opposition, leaders do not retreat or relinquish the victory. They lead when the stakes are high, looking to the Lord to give them the victory.

Apply

Take a moment to pinpoint the area where you need to stand up and step out to lead. Then, determine the first step you’ll take to lead forward, and when you’ll take it. Finally, pray and commit to follow God’s lead in this critical moment.

4

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Nehemiah: Leading With Vision

Team Review

What step have you taken in the past week to lead in the face of fear, pain or spiritual battle?

Assess

What vision are you leading toward right now?

Insights and Ideas

Leadership is all about leading people to a better and brighter future. Author Michael Hyatt observed, “Vision, as I see it, is a clear, inspiring, practical and attractive picture of your organization’s future.”

With vision, leaders take people into a God-inspired tomorrow. Nobody knew this better than Nehemiah.

Vision came alive in Nehemiah’s heart when he asked Hanani and some other men about the Jews and the condition of Jerusalem. They said, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire” (Nehemiah 1:3).

When Nehemiah heard these words, he wept and prayed. In fact, the prayer recorded in Nehemiah 1:5–11 is believed to be a summary of what Nehemiah prayed over the next four months before he finally appeared before King Artaxerxes with a vision to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. From Nehemiah’s vision, we discover three important truths for leaders:

1. *Vision is the solution to a problem.* The stimulus for the formation of Nehemiah’s vision was the question he asked Hanani and the other men. That single question presented a problem — a people in disgrace and a city in ruins. With that question, a vision was born for a people with dignity and a city with walls.

What problem does your vision solve?

2. *Vision is spiritual, emotional and practical.* Nehemiah’s vision was spiritual. It came about through prayer and fasting. Nehemiah’s vision was emotional. He wept and mourned for days. And Nehemiah’s vision was practical. It addressed a real need.

What about your vision? Is it spiritually inspired, emotionally engaging, and practically helpful?

3. *Vision requires the help of God.* If vision can be realized solely in your strength and wisdom, your vision may not be from God. As Nehemiah prayed, he knew he needed the king’s help. So, what did Nehemiah do? He prayed to the Lord, “Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man” (Nehemiah 1:11). And God answered Nehemiah’s prayer by giving him the permission and resources he needed so the vision could move forward.

Leaders lead with vision. They allow the Holy Spirit to birth a picture of a brighter future in their soul, and then they courageously pursue it.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What problem does your vision solve?
2. Which is weakest in your vision: the spiritual, emotional or practical aspect?
3. How are you seeking God’s help to see your vision fulfilled?

Apply

Take some time to reflect on your vision for your area of ministry. Do you need to dream bigger? Is your vision spiritual, emotional and practical? Does your vision meet a specific need or solve a specific problem? Take some time to prayerfully answer these questions and allow the Lord to form a clearer vision within your heart.

4

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Nehemiah: Leading With Vision

Assess

What vision are you leading toward right now?

“Vision, as I see it, is a clear, inspiring, practical, and attractive picture of your organization’s future.” — Michael Hyatt

“Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire” (Nehemiah 1:3).

When Nehemiah heard these words, he wept and prayed. After four months, he finally appeared before King Artaxerxes with a vision to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.

Three truths regarding vision:

1. Vision is the _____ to a problem.

The stimulus for the formation of Nehemiah’s vision was the question he asked Hanani. That single question presented a problem — a people in disgrace and a city in ruins.

2. Vision is _____, _____ and _____.

Nehemiah’s vision was spiritual. It came about through prayer and fasting. Nehemiah’s vision was emotional. He wept and mourned for days. And Nehemiah’s vision was practical. It addressed a real need.

3. Vision requires the _____ of God.

“Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man” (Nehemiah 1:11).

Apply

Take some time to reflect on your vision for your area of ministry. Do you need to dream bigger? Is your vision spiritual, emotional and practical? Does your vision meet a specific need or solve a specific problem? Take some time to prayerfully answer these questions and allow the Lord to form a clearer vision within your heart.

5 | LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Esther: Leading With Courage

Team Review

How has your vision become sharper and bolder?

Assess

What difference does courage make in leadership?

Insights and Ideas

Esther's story is an amazing journey of God raising up an orphan girl to deliver His people. It all started when Esther courageously risked everything to go before the king and reveal Haman's evil plot to have the Jews annihilated. She led courageously, and God honored Esther's faith.

From Esther's story, we discover three important lessons about the importance of courage in leadership:

1. *Courage confronts your resistance.* When Mordecai challenged Esther to plead the case of the Jews before the king, she said, "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king" (Esther 4:11).

But Mordecai wouldn't take "no" for an answer, and eventually Esther found the courage to confront her excuses before her excuses turned into disobedience.

2. *Courage is connected to your calling.* Mordecai went on to tell Esther, "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13–14).

We are not courageous for the sake of normalcy or complacency. Courage is only needed when God calls us into a better tomorrow. Courage is for such a time as this.

3. *Courage compels you to take action.* Author Lance Witt observed, "Courage is not an issue of wiring, but of willingness. It's not an issue of DNA, but of heart."

When you have the willingness and heart, you'll do more than make incremental tweaks or slight adjustments. Instead, you'll muster the bravery to take initiative on a bold idea. That's what Esther did, and delivery came to the Jewish people.

Leading with courage doesn't feel natural, but it is essential. It's the difference between dreaming and doing. It's the difference between talk and action.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What resistance are you facing right now that is trying to snuff out your courage?
2. How does your calling require courage?
3. What courageous action do you need to take this week to move forward with the call or vision God has birthed in your heart?

Apply

Craft a plan to feed your courage and starve your fears. Your plan might include focusing on God, surrounding yourself with positive people, and meditating on the truths of Scripture. Once you create your plan, revisit it for a few minutes each day to help you cultivate the courage to take action.

5

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Esther: Leading With Courage

Assess

What difference does courage make in leadership?

Esther's story is an amazing journey of God raising up an orphan girl to deliver His people.

Courage and leadership lessons from Esther:

1. *Courage confronts your* _____.

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"Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13–14).

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Apply

Craft a plan to feed your courage and starve your fears. Your plan might include focusing on God, surrounding yourself with positive people, and meditating on the truths of Scripture. Once you create your plan, revisit it for a few minutes each day to help you cultivate the courage to take action.

6

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Daniel: Leading With Cultural Influence

Team Review

How has your courage grown as you've fed your faith?

Assess

What does it look like for followers of Jesus to influence culture?

Insights and Ideas

Whether it's in business, education, government, arts, media, science, the Church, or the social sector, God is raising up leaders in every channel of culture to use their influence to meet needs, solve problems, and make a difference.

Daniel was a man who led with cultural influence in the midst of a culture that was hostile toward God. What was his secret? Daniel 6:3 says, "Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom."

How exactly did Daniel distinguish himself? Here are five qualities:

1. **Commitment.** After King Darius decided to elevate Daniel over his entire kingdom, Daniel's fellow administrators and satraps tried to find grounds to discredit him. But after careful consideration, they said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). And when an edict was issued to pray solely to King Darius, Daniel continued to pray to God three times a day (Daniel 6:10). Daniel demonstrated uncompromising commitment to God.
2. **Character.** Daniel 1:8 says, "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way." Rather than eating food that had been offered to idols, Daniel maintained his character and integrity. Moral conviction superseded momentary convenience.
3. **Competence.** Daniel possessed "aptitude for every kind of learning," and he was "quick to understand" (Daniel 1:4). Furthermore, "In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom" (Daniel 1:20). Simply put, Daniel exhibited the highest levels of competence. He led with excellence.
4. **Courage.** When Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall for King Belshazzar, he had the courage to speak the truth (Daniel 5:25–28). And when King Darius issued his narcissistic prayer challenge, Daniel had the courage to remain faithful to God (Daniel 6:10–11).
5. **Consistency.** Daniel modeled these qualities consistently, from the time he was 16 years old until he was in his 80s. As a result, Daniel slowly built influence step by step, day by day, year by year, and choice by choice.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What most inspires you about Daniel's story?
2. Which of the five qualities in Daniel's life and leadership most challenge you?
3. What would it look like for you to lead with cultural influence today?

Apply

Do an honest evaluation of the five qualities Daniel modeled. To which ones do you most need to give attention? How could you intentionally grow in these qualities? How might such growth make you more effective for Christ in today's culture?

6

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Daniel: Leading With Cultural Influence

Assess

What does it look like for followers of Jesus to influence culture?

“Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom” (Daniel 6:3).

How did Daniel distinguish himself?

1. _____.

“We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God” (Daniel 6:5).

2. _____.

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way” (Daniel 1:8).

3. _____.

Daniel possessed “aptitude for every kind of learning,” and he was “quick to understand” (Daniel 1:4). Furthermore, “In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom” (Daniel 1:20).

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Apply

Do an honest evaluation of the five qualities Daniel modeled. To which ones do you most need to give attention? How could you intentionally grow in these qualities? How might such growth make you more effective for Christ in today’s culture?

7

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Mary: Leading Through Devotion

Team Review

After reflecting on the qualities in Daniel's life, how have you been challenged to grow in cultural influence?

Assess

What does "leading through devotion" mean to you?

Insights and Ideas

Christians can lead through their example of devotion to Christ. Mary of Bethany was a woman who modeled such devotion. When Jesus visited the village where Mary and Martha lived, Mary, "sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made" (Luke 10:39–40).

Three times in Scripture, we find Mary at Jesus' feet.

1. *Mary learned from Jesus.* Sitting at Jesus' feet went against the cultural norms of the day. This was the posture of a disciple with a rabbi, a teaching arrangement that normally excluded women. Despite the cultural barriers, Mary chose to sit at the feet of Jesus, taking in everything He had to say. Therein lies an important lesson: Sometimes you have to defy what the culture says so you can hear what Jesus says.

Luke 10:41–42 records Jesus' response to Martha after her objection to Mary's unwillingness to help in the kitchen: "Martha, Martha ... you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed — or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Jesus didn't criticize Martha for her hospitality. He simply pointed out that of the *many* things a person could be doing, *one* thing is most important: spending time in His presence.

2. *Mary found comfort in Jesus.* When her brother Lazarus died, Mary sought comfort in Jesus. John 11:32–33 says, "When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled." Jesus went to the tomb and raised Lazarus from the dead.

3. *Mary showed love to Jesus.* At a dinner prepared for Jesus, Mary showed love for Him through her worship. John 12:3 says, "Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

For Mary, the desire to draw close to Jesus was a regular theme. May the same be said of us.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What inspires you about Mary's commitment to learn at the feet of Jesus?
2. How often do you find yourself, like Martha, distracted by good things while missing the main thing?
3. What step could you take to grow in your devotion to Jesus?

Apply

Take a few minutes to create a personal growth plan. Identify the training, resources, coaching and experiences you could pursue to help you grow in your devotion to Jesus.

7

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Mary: Leading Through Devotion

Assess

What does “leading through devotion” mean to you?

Christians can lead through their example of devotion to Christ. Mary of Bethany was a woman who modeled such devotion. When Jesus visited the village where Mary and Martha lived, Mary, “sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made” (Luke 10:39–40).

Three ways Mary led through devotion:

1. *Mary* _____ *from Jesus.*

Sometimes you have to defy what the culture says so you can hear what Jesus says.

2. *Mary found* _____ *in Jesus.*

“When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled” (John 11:32–33)

3. *Mary showed* _____ *to Jesus.*

“Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:3).

For Mary, the desire to draw close to Jesus was a regular theme. May the same be said of us.

Apply

Take a few minutes to create a personal growth plan. Identify the training, resources, coaching and experiences you could pursue to help you grow in your devotion to Jesus.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS



Priscilla and Aquila: Leading Through Partnership

Team Review

How have you been leading through devotion in the last week?

Assess

What partnerships in ministry have made the biggest impact in your leadership?

Insights and Ideas

Throughout Scripture we find several references to Priscilla and Aquila. In Acts 18, Paul met this couple, “and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them” (verse 3).

After a man named Apollos came to Ephesus and began teaching about Jesus, Priscilla and Aquila heard him and “invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately” (Acts 18:26).

And when Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, he said, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus” (2 Timothy 4:19).

Why was Paul so close to Priscilla and Aquila? Because they were partners in ministry. In Romans 16:3, Paul said, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus.” There was obviously a special relationship between them, and the partnership brought encouragement and support in their ministry efforts.

Partnership is a powerful quality in leadership. As Mother Teresa noted, “You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things.”

There are three advantages to leading through partnerships:

1. *Partnership offers mutual encouragement.* One of the benefits of partnership is the relational value of mutual encouragement. Leadership is tough, and a good partnership allows you to celebrate together during mountaintop experiences and offer words of encouragement in the valleys.
2. *Partnership leverages strengths and minimizes weaknesses.* A good partnership is a win-win. Whether it’s a formal agreement or simply a leader you work with closely, such a relationship will leverage your strengths and minimize your weaknesses. As a result, your ministry or organization should grow in effectiveness and impact.
3. *Partnership multiplies progress.* When you work with others, you tend to accomplish more and go further than you could alone. Rather than resting solely on your abilities, skills, money and time, you can multiply all these resources through the power of partnership.

Progress is greater and longer because you’re not limited to what you or they can do alone. Instead, working together, you multiply your efforts.

Partnership requires intentionality. In the beginning, you may feel like you’re moving slower than if you went it alone. But if you stick with it, you’ll go further than you ever dreamed possible.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What are some examples of formal and informal partnerships in ministry and leadership? Why do we tend to resist partnerships?
2. Can you think of an example where partnership made a real difference in your ministry or organization?
3. What partnerships do you need to strengthen or initiate in your leadership?

Apply

With whom can you partner to accomplish more in ministry? How could this partnership be a win for you and a win for the other person or organization? What steps do you need to take to discuss the possibility of this partnership?



LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Priscilla and Aquila: Leading Through Partnership

Assess

What partnerships in ministry have made the biggest impact in your leadership?

Throughout Scripture we find several references to Priscilla and Aquila. In Acts 18, Paul met this couple, “and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them” (verse 3).

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“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus” (Romans 16:3).

“You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things.” — Mother Teresa

Three qualities of leading through partnership:

1. *Partnership offers mutual* _____.

Leadership is tough, and a good partnership allows you to celebrate together during mountaintop experiences and offer words of encouragement in the valleys.

2. *Partnership leverages* _____ *and minimizes* _____.

A good partnership is a win-win. Whether it’s a formal agreement or simply a leader you work with closely, such a relationship will leverage your strengths and minimize your weaknesses.

3. *Partnership* _____ *progress.*

When you work with others, you tend to accomplish more and go further than you could alone.

Apply

With whom can you partner to accomplish more in ministry? How could this partnership be a win for you and a win for the other person or organization? What steps do you need to take to discuss the possibility of this partnership?



Peter: Leading Through Failure

Team Review

What progress have you made toward strengthening or developing partnerships in leadership?

Assess

How do you typically respond to failures in leadership?

Insights and Ideas

Author Erwin McManus said, “We can become so afraid of death that we never live, so afraid of failure that we never risk, so afraid of pain that we never discover how strong we really are.”

Peter had a résumé full of failures. He also took risks and faced fear. Consider these less-than-stellar moments in Peter’s life:

- Peter sank when he walked on water (Matthew 14:22–32).
- Peter was rebuked by Jesus (Matthew 16:21–23).
- Peter declared he would never deny Jesus (Matthew 26:31–35).
- Peter fell asleep in Jesus’ greatest hour of need (Matthew 26:36–46).
- Peter cut off a man’s ear during Jesus’ arrest (John 18:2–11).
- Peter disowned Jesus three times (Matthew 26:69–75).

Though his failures were numerous, Peter learned to move past each of them. So, how do you lead through failure? Consider these three keys:

1. *Own your failure without letting failure own you.* When Peter denied Jesus, his failure became a cloud over his life. But when Jesus met Peter in his failure, Peter found the strength to own the failure without letting the failure own his future.

As leaders, owning failures means choosing to be responsible for our mistakes. It’s apologizing, making things right, refusing to cast blame, and leading forward rather than languishing permanently in the failure.

2. *Harvest the lessons in your failure.* Every failure has a lesson to offer — often multiple lessons. The only way to harvest those lessons is to slow down long enough to reflect, ask questions, and dig for the truth. If you move too quickly, you’ll leave behind the gold you were meant to take with you. Leading through failure allows you to learn lessons so you don’t repeat them in the future.

3. *Practice the three C’s in the middle of your failure.* If you’re going to lead effectively through failure, you have to put into practice the three C’s: clarity, communication and courage.

First, gain clarity about the failure. Ask why, what went wrong, and what you need to do next. Second, communicate. Take time to communicate clearly, honestly and compassionately to those the failure affects. Finally, have the courage to make the tough decisions so you can move past the failure into a better future.

Failure isn’t easy, and it often comes with layers of pain. These three steps will put you on the path to lead through the failure.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What is a failure you’ve experienced in leadership or ministry?
2. Which lesson above do you most need to embrace when dealing with failure?
3. What additional lessons would you add to the list to lead through failure successfully?

Apply

Take some time to reflect on a recent failure. Did you own the failure without letting the failure own you? What lessons did you learn? Did you put the three C’s into practice? Do an autopsy on your failure, and pinpoint how you can respond better in the future.

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LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Peter: Leading Through Failure

Assess

How do you typically respond to failures in leadership?

“We can become so afraid of death that we never live, so afraid of failure that we never risk, so afraid of pain that we never discover how strong we really are.” — Erwin McManus

Peter’s résumé of failures:

- Peter sank when he walked on water (Matthew 14:22–32).
- Peter was rebuked by Jesus (Matthew 16:21–23).
- Peter declared he would never deny Jesus (Matthew 26:31–35).
- Peter fell asleep in Jesus’ greatest hour of need (Matthew 26:36–46).
- Peter cut off a man’s ear during Jesus’ arrest (John 18:2–11).
- Peter disowned Jesus three times (Matthew 26:69–75).

How to lead through failure:

1. Own your _____ without letting failure _____ you.

As leaders, owning failures means choosing to be responsible for our mistakes. It’s apologizing, making things right, refusing to cast blame, and leading forward rather than languishing permanently in the failure.

2. Harvest the _____ in your failure.

The only way to harvest those lessons is to slow down long enough to reflect, ask questions, and dig for the truth.

3. Practice the three C’s in the _____ of your failure.

If you’re going to lead effectively through failure, you have to put into practice the three C’s: _____, _____ and _____.

Apply

Take some time to reflect on a recent failure. Did you own the failure without letting the failure own you? What lessons did you learn? Did you put the three C’s into practice? Do an autopsy on your failure, and pinpoint how you can respond better in the future.

10

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Paul: Leading Through Hardship

Team Review

What lessons did you learn after diagnosing a recent failure?

Assess

What has been one of the most difficult seasons for you to lead through?

Insights and Ideas

Leadership is a pain magnet. The apostle Paul certainly understood this reality. Here's a snapshot of the hardship Paul encountered as he led in the Early Church:

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23–28).

Despite all of this, Paul didn't quit. What was his secret?

1. Paul's *purpose* was greater than his pain. Paul revealed why his hardship was worthwhile. In Colossians 1:24, he said, "Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you." Then, Paul said of Christ's body, the Church, "I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness" (verse 25). Then Paul said of Christ, "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me" (verses 28–29).

Paul was able to endure so much suffering because he kept his purpose in focus.

2. Paul's *prize* motivated him to keep going. In Philippians 3:14, Paul described the prize that kept him moving forward: "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Knowing Christ was Paul's highest aim.

When your purpose is clear and your prize is in focus, hardship is worth it in the end. As Mark Batterson observed, "God doesn't always deliver us from our difficulties, but He does deliver us through them."

Reflect and Discuss

1. How does Paul's testimony inspire you to trust God through tough times?
2. Why do we expect leadership to be easy, and what does God want to do in our lives through the hardship?
3. What purpose and prize are driving you?

Apply

Take some time to prayerfully process any hardship you are experiencing. Ask God to speak to you through the pain, and then invite Him to protect your heart from growing cold or jaded.

10

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM 10 BIBLICAL LEADERS

Paul: Leading Through Hardship

Assess

What has been one of the most difficult seasons for you to lead through?

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Paul’s secret to leading through hardship:

1. Paul’s _____ *was greater than his pain.*

“Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you” (Colossians 1:24).

2. Paul’s _____ *motivated him to keep going.*

“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

“God doesn’t always deliver us from our difficulties, but He does deliver us through them.” — Mark Batterson

Apply

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