

MARKS OF BIBLICAL CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP **AS ILLUSTRATED IN JUDGES**

1) Occasioned by a crisis of some sort

ex. Jdg. 3:7-8 Oppression by Cushan-Rishathaim - 8 yrs

Result : Israelites cried out to the Lord

6:1-6 Oppression by Midianites - 7 yrs

Result : Israelites cried out to the Lord

2) Confirmed by an affirmation of transcendent power or relationship to God

In our secular, anti-supernatural age, “charisma” is seen as something one is born with. Ancient peoples would never have understood it that way. They believed that any gift or grace was given by God or the gods.

2 methods of Biblical Confirmation

1. Prophetic call, or “Yahweh raised up...”

2. Spiritual filling, coming upon, gifting

ex. Jg. 3:9 “He raised up a deliverer, Othniel... the spirit of the Lord came upon him”

Ch. 6 - Gideon

-theophany with signs and wonders

-dream confirmation (7:14)

-spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon (6:34)

*Conclusion: Charismatic leaders not only respond to a crisis, but are “raised up” by God. Judges 2:26 is the editorial, theological commentary on this phenomenon.

3) Authority of the charismatic leader arises spontaneously, and is sustained by personal loyalties rather than structures. Such leadership can decline quickly, as the only glue holding it together is loyalty and a growing sense of tradition.

1. No hereditary succession possible

Jdg 8:22 Gideon knew this, rejected it

9 Abimelech tried, and failed

2. Spontaneous personal response in Judges

3:27 Ehud “blew a trumpet...and the Israelites went with him.”

6:34 Gideon “blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also to Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali.”

3. Little mention of judges in genealogies

-no dynasty possible

4. New Testament

-Jesus had no office, or external authority. Followers were motivated by love for Him.

-The church, in its earliest form, and anywhere it does not have governmental sanction, is a purely voluntary community. Leadership frequently arises and flourishes on charismatic grounds alone.

Note, however, that even within the N.T. there are other grounds established (elders, deacons etc.). So, no one pattern is divine.

4) Charismatic leaders exhibit different personal characteristics than official leaders

1. BASIC: God uses all types of personality; there is no “right” or “wrong” type.
2. Charismatic leadership does not discriminate for or against any social class, sex or age-group.
 - a. Deborah could never have been king or priest in Israel, but she could be prophet and judge.
 - b. Jephthah’s illegitimate birth would have been a barrier to official position; not charismatic.
 - c. Gideon’s tribal status (6:15) would have eliminated him from official (royal) position.
 - d. Samson’s social mores would have landed him in jail in monarchy times; in heroic, charismatic society he becomes a hero.
3. Charismatic leadership often espouses heroic personal values which may appear strange or even bizarre to later generations. These values include:
 - a. Physical prowess and feats of valor
 - (1) Samson’s strength
 - (2) Shamgar - 3:31
 - b. Craftiness valued over organization
 - (1) Riddles, fables: Samson
 - (2) Deception: Ehud, Jael, Gideon, Samson
 - c. Sense of anomaly
 - (1) Younger over older - Gideon, David
 - (2) Women over men - Deborah, Jael
 - (3) Inferior over superior - Jephthah
 - (4) Unlikely Nazirite - Samson
 - d. Tragic flaw
 - (1) Gideon - golden ephod
 - (2) Jephthah - rash vow re: daughter
 - (3) Samson - inability to resist women
 - e. Epic detail: a characteristic of heroic literature, which always follows charismatic leadership
 - (1) Eglon’s fat and the knife
 - (2) Jael’s execution of Sisera cf. poetic detail in 5:24-27
 - (3) Sisera’s mother (5:28-30)
 - (4) Samson and Delilah

5) Strengths of Charismatic Leadership

1. Only charismatic leadership guarantees the right person for the immediate task at hand. The gift and the need match. When God raised up charismatic leaders, there was no question as to whether they could do the job that God had called them to do. He called, equipped, and was with them throughout their term.

2. Charismatic leadership inspires confidence in its followers. Often, in the case of official leadership

the leaders lack true followers, because their position does not depend upon personal loyalties.

3. Charismatic leaders generally have confidence in their ability to lead. There is not the wondering if appointment will produce the ability to grasp and use the authority inherent in the office. To be called is to be equipped (contrast to the initial reluctance frequently observed in charismatic leaders).

4. In biblical charismatic leadership, the task is accompanied by the power to perform. It must be remembered that, biblically, all charisma is from the Spirit. And, beyond the natural, there is that filling with the power of the Spirit of God, which produced the great victories of the period of the judges.

5. With charismatic leadership, each generation produces fresh leadership. We are all too familiar, with worn-out leaders, clinging to office, grasping for a slipping power, and struggling to maintain a fading glory. Charismatic leadership bypasses all that.

6. Charismatic leadership encourages innovation. Traditions guide the charismatic leader, but institutional inflexibility does not hamper him.

6) Weaknesses of Charismatic Leadership

1. Society under the judges lacked stable, ongoing structure. There was no way, in this scenario, that this could be “fixed”. It required a new beginning.

2. Charismatic leadership breeds individualism, and only flourishes when individualism flourishes. As long as the prevailing leadership continued, in the Judges period, it was inevitable that “every man would do what was right in his own eyes”. And, biblically, individualism is not always a virtue.

3. Society, in a charismatic period, cannot develop strong institutions. Empires, both good and bad, cannot survive the free-wheeling heroic style. It is just too flimsy to support the structures that a modern, complex social unit like a city requires.

4. Charismatic leadership has no real continuity. The difficulty we have in trying to read the book of Judges as a connected historical narrative illustrates the point. Judges, however much the author longed to transform it into an epic tale of Israel’s ongoing historical development, still comes out as a series of cycles, loosely connected to one another. It is not clear, humanly speaking, that Israel was headed anywhere during the time of the judges. If there is any conclusion to be drawn from it, it is that God, almost in spite of Israel, created and sustained the very notion of historical progress. Because the writer Judges knew this to be true, he could put all of the disparity into a framework that in time became part of the greatest literary and philosophical unity the world has ever known, the Bible.