

Looking at Leadership: Lessons from 1 and 2 Kings

Leaders Guide



13 online adult Sunday school lessons

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**Acacia Resources, a division of Baptist Center for Ethics
4219 Hillsboro Road, Suite 210
Nashville, Tennessee 37215
(615) 383-3192 phone
(615) 383-0915 fax
www.acaciaresources.com**

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About Acacia Resources

The biblical witness singles out acacia wood for its uniqueness. The only wood mentioned in the building of the ark of the covenant, the tabernacle and the altar is acacia. Acacia wood is listed with other precious objects—gold, silver, fragrant incense, onyx stones—given to honor God.

Today's acacia tree is known for its value, diversity and durability. Some acacia trees have fragrant flowers used in making perfume. The seeds are edible. The bark is rich in tannin, a substance used in tanning, dyes, inks and pharmaceuticals. Furniture, oars, tools and gunstocks are made of the hard lumber from the acacia tree.

Some 1,200 species of acacia trees and shrubs exist throughout much of the world, including Africa, Australia and North America. The acacia species is tough enough to survive the semiarid regions of Africa where its roots sink deep to capture the rare water which runs quickly into the soil.

The name *acacia* symbolically ties BCE's publishing initiative to our biblical heritage. The acacia tree represents the wise value attached to educational resources, the diversity of needs within churches and the durability demanded for growing healthy Christians, whether they are singles, couples with children or senior adults.

Acacia Resources will guide Christians and draw them godward, as the ark of acacia wood guided the people of Israel in their journey and represented the presence of God in their midst.

For more information about Acacia Resources, call 615-383-3192 or visit our Web site at www.acaciaresources.com.

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A *Looking at Leadership* Students Guide is also available from Acacia Resources (www.acaciaresources.com).

Preface

The sports names are legendary: Aaron and Ruth. Jordan and Barkley. Elway and Marino. Agassi and Williams. Nicholas and Sorenstam. Owens and Rudolph. Pelé, Gretzky, Jenner and Retton.

From the wide world of entertainment come names like Rogers and Hammerstein, Hitchcock and Coppola, Olivier and Hepburn, Spielberg, Elvis and Jackson.

Gates and Buffett mean business.

From the pages of social movements and governments leap the names of men and women who have changed the course of history: King, Chavez, Meier, Gandhi and Carter. Joining them are Bush, Blair, Arafat and Hussein.

In inimitable ways, a tiny woman called Teresa and a man with a booming voice named Graham introduced thousands to Christianity.

Leaders emerge in every sector of every culture. A number rise to the top because they are the best at what they do. Some take the reigns of leadership by cunning, treachery or force. Others seem to stumble into place and never quite figure out what they are supposed to do. A few claim that divine providence has placed them at the helm.

Whether they are respected or reviled, successes or disappointments, the lives of each display qualities we can either emulate or avoid. All offer lessons in the school of leadership.

In every arena, faithful and effective leaders share certain qualities, are subject to failure and face thorny experiences that test their mettle.

Some leaders are Christian. Are all Christians leaders?

A careful search of scripture does not reveal a specific command from Jesus to “be a leader.” It does, however, issue a call to a kind of revolutionary discipleship and commitment that regularly places followers of Christ squarely in the middle of situations that demand clear thinking, positive speaking and decisive action.

Sounds a lot like leadership, doesn't it?

Following Christ means that leadership opportunities regularly arise. Few Christians are leaders in every situation, all of the time. All are called to lead as a result of their obedience to Jesus' commands to actively engage with the world at every level. Those opportunities come at both expected and unexpected times.

Looking at leadership honestly means looking at the best and the worst. Scripture offers examples of both.

At its heart, leadership for the Christian means loving God, walking in God's ways, acknowledging God's blessing, confessing personal limitations and corporate failures, doing justice, seeking peace and asking God for the gift of discernment.

The pace of our culture demands that those in leadership gather and assess facts quickly and make decisions based on available knowledge. At best, that knowledge is incomplete, and human visual scope is limited. Though we say we value history, we ignore it more often than not.

While Christian leaders can arrive at moments of decision with certain wisdom in place by virtue of their relationship with God, they never know it all. Their wisdom grows as they face tough problems and make difficult choices. They learn to listen, test options and take suitable action. When leaders show good judgment, they gain the respect of those they lead.

Many popular and powerful leaders have discovered the hard way that morality matters. Even Christian leaders are tempted to make poor personal and communal choices. As a result, they face loss of respect, influence and the ability to lead.

Christian leaders are not immune to factors and influences that result in failure. Religious life in particular seems to promote a “Superman” and “Wonder Woman” phenomenon that expects Herculean strength and exacts a schedule with no reprieves.

Physical fatigue opens the door for all sorts of lapses: blurred judgment, inability to focus, divided loyalties, sagging commitment, spiritual unfaithfulness, even depression. Failure is never far behind.

It also lurks around the corner when leaders choose to listen only to those who tell them what they want to hear and ignore the voices of others with legitimate points and concerns.

Unfortunately, even some Christian leaders terribly abuse their positions. They know religious jargon well enough to cast their purely selfish motives in those terms, convincing many that they are genuine, sincere and speak for God.

Those who lead long enough will sooner or later run headlong into a number of complex experiences that require

patience and wisdom to navigate. Encountering them indicates not failure but longevity, faithfulness, wisdom, courage and respect.

Knowing when to take a risk is one of those experiences. Wise leaders facing this dilemma listen to advice from all kinds of people and weigh options carefully. They recognize that not all decisions are clear cut, and risky decisions in particular may mean traveling some unmarked and bumpy paths.

Long-term religious leaders regularly find themselves in the midst of wealthy and powerful people. Some even begin to feel that they too have worked hard and deserve some of the comforts money and material things can bring. The temptation to grasp some of that wealth for themselves is ever present.

Eventually, every leader must either step down or step aside. Wise leaders prepare carefully for the ones who will follow them and take steps to facilitate a smooth transition.

Some faithful Christian leaders follow others whose tenure was characterized by reckless and selfish disobedience. In spite of their consistent pursuit of righteousness, they cannot always stem the tide of destruction their predecessors set into motion. They and those they lead must sometimes live with the long-term consequences of earlier sin. Is their leadership any less effective? No. But history may regard them unkindly, or not at all.

As Christians, looking at leadership means looking at ourselves. What are our strengths? Where are our weaknesses? At what points are we most apt to stumble or snap? When should we be assertive? When do we need to back off? Will we be found faithful and consistent?

Since you likely both lead and follow, lessons from 1 and 2 Kings offer helpful examples that can enable you to do each more wisely, effectively and faithfully.

Written by Jan Turrentine, managing editor for Acacia Resources, Baptist Center for Ethics, Nashville, Tenn.

Faithful Leaders Discern the Lord's Wisdom Leaders Guide

1 Kings 3:3-15

³Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. ⁴The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" ¹⁰It pleased the LORD that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. ¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. ¹⁴If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life. ¹⁵Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. He offered up burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, and provided a feast for all his servants.

Theme: The wisdom of God is the foundation for Christian leadership.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.
- For an excerpt from the essay about Jimmy Carter by Hendrick Hertzberg (see below), visit www.pbs.org/newshour/character/essays/carter.html.
- You may find the book *Leading Quietly: An Unorthodox Guide to Doing the Right Thing* by Joseph Badaracco a helpful resource. To read a review, go to www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2922.
- The following features about the movie "Radio" may also enhance discussion in your class about "doing the right thing" as you apply the truths of this scripture:
 - "Radio" (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=3278);
 - "'Radio' Director, Stars Discuss Doing Right Thing" (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=3264).

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Lead your class to think about leadership from a Christian perspective by relating the following example:

Critics as well as conventional wisdom tend to agree that Jimmy Carter is a better former President

than he was a President. But most people agree that he has consistently lived his faith and exhibited qualities of Christian leadership for decades.

Hendrick Hertzberg served on the White House staff throughout the Carter administration and from 1979 to 1981 was the President's chief speechwriter. In an essay about the former President, he rightly noted the value of looking at post-presidential careers as a way of deepening our understanding of those presidencies. Individual character traits and personal qualities projected during a presidency tend to emerge even stronger once the former President is back in private life, proving their authenticity. Carter has proven to be "the real thing."

"Carter's style of leadership was and is more religious than political in nature," Hertzberg wrote. "He was and is a moral leader more than a political leader. And I think this helps explain not only some of his successes as President but also some of his failures.

"Look at how he was elected in the first place. In the early and decisive days of his campaign, he spoke the language of religion and morality far more, and far more effectively, than he spoke the language of politics. He spoke openly and convincingly about his Christian faith—and he managed to do this in a way that was inclusive and tolerant. Nowadays every politician seems to feel obligated to talk about being born again ... Carter was Christian before Christian was cool" (www.pbs.org/newshour/character/essays/carter.html).

Hertzberg noted that Carter's ability to tell right from wrong would have made him a great President

during a time of moral crisis. The biggest problems he faced while President, however, were of different natures. But in the foreign policy arena, his "moral ideology" provided a clear guide to action. He pursued peace and advocated for human rights while he was President and has continued to do so.

"These two values were the lodestars by which he guided his conduct of foreign affairs," Hertzberg said, and "these values were expressions of his sense of religious and moral duty."

- Guide the class to discuss the intersection of Christian faith and leadership by asking such questions as:
 - ▶ *What is your reaction to political leaders who publicly reference their faith?*
 - ▶ *Are you more or less skeptical of their motivations today than you were 10-20 years ago? Why or why not?*
 - ▶ *Do you think that the number of these politicians has increased or decreased in recent years? To what do you attribute that trend?*
- Ask class members to give examples of other political leaders who have referred to their faith within the context of political debate, campaign or decision. Then ask:
- ▶ *How do you determine whether a political leader's faith professions are genuine? What evidences do you watch for in his or her life?*

► *What is a Christian's responsibility in terms of leadership? Are all Christians leaders?*

Explore the Bible

- Set the stage for Solomon's early leadership by asking class members to recall facts about him. Supplement their information with the following, as necessary:

Solomon was the child of King David and Bathsheba. David had an older son, Adonijah, so Solomon was not the likely or assumed successor to the throne. Bathsheba conspired with the prophet Nathan to convince David to designate Solomon as heir to the throne instead of his half-brother. The story of Solomon's rise to the throne is full of rebellion, manipulation, jealousy, broken promises, revenge, even assassinations.

Ask a class member to read aloud 1 Kings 2:1-3 which includes the instructions Solomon received from King David before his death. Note specifically the phrase "keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies" (v 3).

Point out that the remainder of 1 Kings 2 details Solomon's establishment of his kingdom, including the murders of Joab, a general; Shimei, a long-time critic; and Adonijah, his half-brother. Chapter 3 opens by revealing that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in spite of a specific command from God prohibiting marriage to foreigners (Deut 7:1-6).

- Read aloud 1 Kings 3:3-4; then ask someone to explain the significance of "high places." Point out

that these were worship sites most closely associated with the Canaanites and their gods, including Baal, although the Israelites sometimes worshiped at high places too. They were earlier commanded to destroy the high places of the Canaanites (Num 33:52; Deut 12:2-3), yet worship of Baal and other Canaanite gods at such places persisted and even flourished.

In this case, scripture records that Solomon "loved the LORD" and walked "in the statutes of his father David" (v 3). Within this context, his sacrifice at Gibeon appears to have been in worship of Yahweh.

- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 3:5-9. Then ask:
 - *What offer did God make to Solomon?*
 - *How did Solomon respond?*
 - *How do you interpret Solomon's response?*
 - *What did Solomon finally ask of God? Why was this significant?*
- Read aloud 1 Kings 3:10-14 and note God's response to Solomon's request. Point out that Solomon's request indicated that he realized true wisdom comes from God and that he had a responsibility to lead his nation toward an understanding of what were the right things to do.

Apart from its treacherous beginnings, Solomon's early leadership showed great promise, and his initial request pleased God. God agreed to grant Solomon's request for "a wise and discerning mind"

(v 12); in addition, God promised Solomon unmatched riches and honor (v 13), on one condition. Solomon must walk according to God's way and keep God's statutes and commandments. King David's earlier advice to his son was reflected in God's conditional promise to Solomon.

Read aloud verse 15 and note that Solomon's experience had come through a dream. Point out that he left the high place of worship, returned to Jerusalem and again worshiped God by standing before the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God's presence.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Lead the class to draw some conclusions about Solomon's early years as king. Guide them to apply insights from Solomon's life to their own experiences as leaders and followers by asking such questions as:
 - ▶ *What parallels do you see between Solomon and some of our leaders today?*
 - ▶ *How can we achieve the proper balance between the two extremes of expecting moral perfection from leaders and refusing to trust any leader because some have disappointed us? How can we honestly assess and critically appraise leaders without either idolizing them or completely giving up on them?*
 - ▶ *What does God's use of Solomon as a leader tell you about the divine plan?*

▶ *What do you think is the most essential quality of successful leadership? As Christians placed either occasionally or regularly in places of leadership and influence, what should we seek first?*

- Cite the following example from the business world:

FedEx believes its best leaders share nine personal attributes, things the company defines quite specifically. It also has a system for rating prospective leaders on whether they hold these qualities, which include charisma, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, courage, dependability, flexibility, integrity, judgment and respect for others.

FedEx defines integrity as doing what is morally and ethically right, and believes a person of integrity "does not abuse management privileges" and "is a consistent role model" (<http://pf.fastcompany.com/magazine/13/9faces.html>).

Recall for the class the words of Martin Luther King Jr.: "Cowardice asks the question: Is it safe? Consensus asks the question: Is it popular? Conscience asks the question: Is it right?"

As an example, call attention to the 2003 movie "Radio." Inspired by the real story of James Robert Kennedy, it "is more than a sports movie," according to EthicsDaily.com culture editor Cliff Vaughn. "It's really a story about helping others, treating others with respect, and having the courage to do what's right—especially when it's not easy."

In the movie, the coach of the high school football team (played by Ed Harris) befriends a mentally

challenged young man known as Radio (played by Cuba Gooding Jr.). He invites Radio to help manage the team, giving him a new place not only on the sidelines but also in the school. Not everyone is happy with his decision. Some believe Radio is a distraction; others are afraid of what he might do. Even Radio's mother doubts the coach's motives and asks him why he is helping her son.

"I figure it's the right thing to do," the coach says.

"I figure there's a lot out there that's right," the mother shoots back. "It don't mean we do it."

- Close with prayer, asking God to grant you the wisdom to discern what is good and right as you both lead and follow others.

Faithful Leaders Practice the Gift of Wisdom Leaders Guide

1 Kings 3:16-28

¹⁶Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷The one woman said, "Please, my lord, this woman and I lived in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. ¹⁸Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house. ¹⁹Then this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. ²⁰She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. ²¹When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne."²²But the other woman said, "No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours." The first said, "No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine." So they argued before the king.²³Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; while the other says, 'Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'" ²⁴So the king said, "Bring me a sword," and they brought a sword before the king. ²⁵The king said, "Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other." ²⁶But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—"Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!" The other said, "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it." ²⁷Then the king responded: "Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother." ²⁸All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.

Theme: Faithful leaders exercise good judgment, influential decision-making and godly wisdom.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.
- You may find the following online articles helpful as you teach people who both lead and follow:

“Dynamics of Leadership,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2459);
“Dealing with Conflict in Congregations,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=1845);
“What Church Followers Should Know About Church Leaders,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2417);
“Clout: Tapping Spiritual Wisdom to Become a Person of Influence,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2495).

- Remember as you teach that your role involves helping people learn to think for themselves. Instead of telling them *what* to think, you play a significant role in teaching them *how* to think. This is especially important in dealing with scriptures where some ambiguity exists.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Begin by asking class members to cite examples from movies in which characters are engaged in intense personal conflict. Such films may include “Ordinary People,” “The Story of Us,” “12 Angry Men,” “The Doctor” and “The Accidental Tourist,” as well as others with which you may be familiar.

Lead them to discuss those situations by asking such questions as:

- ▶ *What issues were involved in the characters’ conflict?*
- ▶ *What were the results of their conflict?*
- ▶ *How was the conflict resolved?*
- ▶ *Was an intermediary involved in the management or resolution of the conflict? If so, how?*
- ▶ *Which characters displayed good judgment? Which displayed poor judgment?*

- Point out that conflict is one of the main components of fiction. Good novels and movies rely on conflict to build and sustain a story and bring it to some type of resolution. The conflict around which a story centers usually represents some type of obstacle for the main character to overcome.

Conflict is also a major component of life. Most of us regularly encounter conflicts, both minor and major, in the course of living our lives. We experience inner, emotional conflicts, as well as conflicts with other people. Both our society and nature can create conflicts for us, often creating circumstances over which we have no control.

Lead adults to consider how they respond to and resolve personal conflicts by asking such questions as:

- ▶ *What is the source of most of the conflict you experience?*

► *When conflict arises between you and another individual, how do you respond?*

► *Does the arena in which the conflict takes place affect how you try to resolve it? For example, is your conflict resolution style different at home than it is at work or church?*

► *Have you ever been involved in a serious conflict in which an arbitrator or mediator helped bring resolution? If so, what qualities did that person possess that enabled him or her to bring resolution to the situation? What actions did the parties involved take?*

► *What do you think is the most important quality people need when resolving disputes and conflicts?*

Explore the Bible

- Ask adults to recall the events which led to Solomon's succession to the throne. Point out the conflict that surrounded Solomon's rise to the throne. Remind adults of Solomon's dream in which God appeared to him and granted him his wish for wisdom. Then ask:
 - *What is your impression of Solomon at this point? What response would you have had to him as the leader of your nation?*
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 3:16-22. Explain that the purpose of this story is to demonstrate the wisdom God gave Solomon per his request (3:11-12). Then ask:

► *What is unusual to you about this story?*

► *Why do you think that this dispute made it all the way to the king's attention? Was that a common occurrence?*

Explain the difference between common and cultic prostitutes in this culture, and point out that the two women in this story were the former. Remind the class that a woman who was raped or orphaned or whose husband died could be forced to become a common prostitute as her only means of support.

Summarize the nature of the conflict between the two women, and point out that the king really had few facts to draw from. It is difficult to tell which of the two women was telling the truth, and because there were apparently no witnesses, the king would have to exercise judgment atypical of usual court cases. Also point out that both women were likely quite distressed and emotional in their speech, for obvious reasons.

- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 3:23-27. Then ask:
 - *What is your reaction to the way Solomon handled this case?*
 - *What would you have done had you been in Solomon's position?*
 - *Do you think that Solomon somehow knew this child's mother would speak up and intervene so that the child's life would be spared?*

► *In what ways did Solomon display good judgment and wisdom in this case?*

Point out that we do not know which of the two women in the story was deemed to be the mother of the child, the one who spoke first in the earlier argument, or the other. We also do not know whether the accusation that the babies were switched in the night was true or false.

- Call attention to the results of the king's judgment by reading aloud 1 Kings 3:28. Then ask:

► *Does it seem strange to you that the news of this conflict and the king's judgment related to it were spread throughout the nation? Why do you think Solomon's decision was so influential?*

► *What do you think the narrator of this story wants us to conclude?*

► *What is your assessment of Solomon and his leadership at this stage of his life?*

Apply Biblical Truth

- Jeff Woods is executive minister for the American Baptist Churches of Ohio and has written extensively in the area of leadership, including conflict management and resolution. In a column for EthicsDaily.com, Woods noted that "the most important tool for managing conflict is listening." Good leaders help people listen to each other. "In the midst of listening, people often realize that their actual differences are not as great as originally perceived" (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=1845).

Woods also noted the difference between conflict resolution and conflict management. "The main role of conflict management is to help people understand that conflict is natural. When conflict, however, rises above a manageable level, it becomes necessary to seek to resolve the conflict." The most important tool in that case, Woods believes, is mediation.

Ask adults to evaluate Solomon's handling of the situation between the two women in light of these suggestions from Woods. Then lead them to apply these principles to areas of conflict they experience by asking them to reflect silently on these questions:

► *How well do I listen to the other people involved when conflict arises? Do I ever feel that others fail to listen to me?*

► *When conflict arises, do I tend to want to ignore it and hope that it will go away, deal with it immediately or wait until I have all of the available facts?*

► *When I am called upon to mediate a conflict, what do I do first? What do I do to ensure that I will remain neutral, listen to all sides of the conflict and make a wise decision?*

- Woods has also noted that no one leads all of the time; most people experience moments of both leading and following. He identified some things that separate leaders from followers:
 - Leaders "have a different perspective than followers. Leaders are the ones with the 'big picture' perspective. While no leader ever obtains all of the pieces, leaders usually have more puzzle pieces

than any one follower at any point in time”
(www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2459).

- ▶ Leaders have a voice that followers do not have, and they “have access to every member of the group. ... Leaders can surface the silent voice, squelch the obnoxious presence, and sound the alarm amidst the runaway train.”
- ▶ Leaders also serve as the voice of the referee, the most powerful person in the game. “While such power is available to influence the outcome (which leaders may use inappropriately), the greater power of the referee is to set the stage for the best possible outcome to occur, one that will be accepted by all participants and all spectators,” he said.
- ▶ Leaders are the ones who prioritize, Woods pointed out, and they should never underestimate the power of prioritizing.

Woods believes that “leadership is more about skills than about traits. While society commonly believes that certain individuals are born with particular personality traits that predispose them to leadership, the reality is that no one has ever been able to identify what those traits are! Traits serve merely to define one’s *style* of leadership rather than one’s *capacity* for leadership. The reality is that anyone can learn the skills to function as a leader”
(www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2417).

- Affirm the leadership skills you observe in your class members and encourage them to continue to develop those skills. Close with prayer, asking God to help you exercise good judgment and godly wisdom in your various spheres of influence.

Faithful Leaders Make Worship a Priority Leaders Guide

1 Kings 5

²Solomon sent word to Hiram, saying, ³“You know that my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. ... ⁵So I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to my father David ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.’”

1 Kings 6

²The house that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. ... ⁷The house was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built. ... ¹²“Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father, David. ¹³I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.

Theme: Faithful leaders make both public and private worship a priority and live lives that reflect their devotion to God.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.
- Plan to display photographs and souvenir guidebooks from various churches, cathedrals, synagogues, mosques and other worship sites. Arrange

ahead of time for various class members to contribute to this display. Plan to use these photographs to engage your class members in initial dialogue about places of worship.

- You may find the following features helpful as you lead your class to discuss the importance of worship:

“The Difference Between Worship and Grandstanding” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=1890);

“The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2031);

“Maybe We Can Save the Sound of All Worship Languages” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=1673).

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Encourage class members to browse through the photographs and guidebooks from various worship sites.

Remind the class that in many cultures, worship sites have historically played more than one role. While they were erected to bring people closer to God, they have also served other purposes, including fortresses during times of war and status symbols—reflections of the region’s wealth and power.

Ask volunteers to describe various churches, cathedrals, mosques and synagogues they have visited by responding to questions such as these:

- ▶ *What is the most impressive worship site you have ever seen? Why?*
 - ▶ *What is the simplest worship site you have ever seen? How would you describe it?*
 - ▶ *Where have you had your most profound personal encounter with God in worship? What were the surroundings? How was your life changed as a result of worshipping in that place?*
 - ▶ *What priority do you think we should place on the kind of worship facility we have?*
 - ▶ *What does the way a worship facility looks and is furnished say to those within that faith community? What does it say to those outside the faith community? How does a worship facility reflect devotion to God?*
- Ask class members who have served on committees responsible for overseeing the building or renovation of a worship facility to describe that experience. Ask them to explain the purpose they envisioned for the facility, the group or church’s philosophy behind how it should look and any other specific details related to its construction. Then ask:
 - ▶ *When the building project was completed, what were the results?*
 - ▶ *Were there clear indicators that the facility enabled people to worship God more completely?*

What were they?

Explore the Bible

- Note that 1 Kings 5-6 records in great detail the building of the temple under Solomon's leadership. Remind the class that King David, Solomon's father, had long envisioned a permanent place where the Israelites could worship God. For years during their wandering, they had carried the ark of the covenant as a symbol of God's presence with them. King David wanted a permanent structure to house God's presence and had begun making some of the arrangements for its construction in the years of his reign. He even wrote or collected some of the psalms the people would later use in worship in the temple. But King David was prevented by war and other preoccupations from overseeing the construction of the temple. That responsibility fell to his son, Solomon.
- Read aloud selected verses from 1 Kings 5:1-18, noting particularly verses 1-5. Call attention to the relationship Solomon reaffirmed with Hiram and the arrangements he made to import from him the cedar and cypress necessary to build the temple. Also read aloud verse 12, noting that again God gave Solomon wisdom for the task that lay ahead.

Ask class members to scan verses 1-18 and respond to questions such as these:

▶ *Why was Solomon able to devote himself fully to the task of building the temple?*

▶ *How did Solomon display wise leadership in planning for the temple's construction?*

▶ *What specifically did Solomon do that reflected the marks of a good leader?*

- Call attention to the details concerning the actual construction of the temple in 1 Kings 6:1-10. Help your class understand more about the temple's physical appearance by providing these details:
 - ▶ When "the temple" is mentioned in reference to Hebrew scripture, it is this structure that is recalled. It is widely known as "Solomon's Temple" and is considered Solomon's most significant contribution to Israel's history. There are no architectural remains of the structure today.
 - ▶ Assuming the royal cubit was used as a measurement, the temple's interior was about 105 feet long, 35 feet wide and 52 feet high. It was divided into three rooms and was three stories high. Doors were intricately carved with cherubim, palm trees and flowers and covered with gold; much of the floor was also overlaid with gold.
 - ▶ The temple was also surrounded on the outside by significant storage space, pillars and other things important in the people's worship, although we have no actual description of the outside of the temple. This temple was ultimately destroyed when the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar, invaded Jerusalem in 587/6 BC.

Ask:

▶ *What do the details described in the temple's construction tell you about the value and significance Solomon placed on the temple?*

- Read aloud 1 Kings 6:11-13 and note that God was most concerned not with the physical structure called the temple, but with the way the people lived. Public worship was to be a significant part of their lives, but also important to God was the way they lived in relation to God and to each other apart from the temple setting.

Point out selected verses from 1 Kings 6:24-38 which indicate Solomon's desire that God have the very best. Note especially verse 22 and Solomon's desire that the temple be "perfect."

Then ask:

- ▶ *What message did the completed temple send about the God to whom it was dedicated?*
- ▶ *What impressions of Solomon as a leader do you have from the study of this text?*
- ▶ *What seemed to be priorities for Solomon?*

Apply Biblical Truth

- Remind the class that in spite of the opulence and exquisite décor of the temple, what it symbolized was most important. To Solomon and the people of Israel, it symbolized God's presence among them. The God of the temple was more important than the temple itself, and it was this God whom Solomon and the people worshiped. Solomon's leadership resulted in a place where the people could focus completely on and worship God.

- Compare and contrast the temple Solomon built with this example, or another example of a significant but simple place of worship you know about:

The sanctuary of Crosscreek Baptist Church in Pelham, Alabama, stands in stark contrast to the worship centers of many typical evangelical churches and especially the temple Solomon built. Yet like those places of worship, every detail in the Crosscreek sanctuary was designed to draw people closer to God, allowing them to worship God fully and completely.

Open, exposed beams reflect an effort to provide a sense of transcendence within the worship space. The pulpit, offset to one side and slightly raised, allows the altar to remain central. Neither preaching nor preacher are "center stage," according to pastor James Evans, but are instead only one element in the service of worship. Carefully chosen furnishings are plain but meaningful.

Simplicity was the goal in the worship facility's original design, Evans said. Original planners wanted Crosscreek to be a sort of "everyperson" church that was both inviting and uplifting.

- Lead the class to evaluate the priority they place on worship as people who both lead and follow. Ask them to respond silently to such questions as:
 - ▶ *Is a physical yet sacred space important for you to worship? Why or why not?*
 - ▶ *How do you define worship?*
 - ▶ *How does worship redirect or refocus your life?*

► *How does what you experience in a sanctuary of worship translate into your everyday life?*

► *How do you experience the God of the sacred places in the often complicated and messy world of interpersonal relationships, decision-making, conflict resolution and other aspects of leading and following?*

- Close with a prayer of commitment to making both public and private worship a priority and to living lives that reflect devotion to God.

Faithful Leaders Call for High Moral Standards

Leaders Guide

1 Kings 8:22-26

²²Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. ²³He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ²⁴the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand.

²⁵Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' ²⁶Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David.

Theme: Faithful leaders walk after God's way, repenting and seeking forgiveness when they sin.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.
- You may find the following online articles helpful as you guide adults to discuss the need for leaders to possess and call for high moral standards:

“Poll Says Americans Are Pessimistic About Ethics and Morality” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2679);

“Christians Must Demonstrate, Apply God’s Moral Truth” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2369);

“Americans Speak: Enron, WorldCom and Others Are Result of Inadequate Moral Training By Families” (www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=117&Reference=E&Key=Leadership).

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- List the following categories on a board or chart:

Religion
Politics
Business
Sports
Education
Media
Entertainment
Health-care

Review these areas of public life one by one and ask class members to recall in each case recent examples of moral failure or scandal. Place a hash mark or other symbol beside each area for each different situation someone recalls.

Then ask:

► *How has public confidence in leaders been affected by these scandals?*

► *Are public leaders held to a higher standard of morality? Should they be?*

► *When a public figure admits to wrongdoing or some type of moral failure, does that automatically signal the end of his or her power, authority and influence?*

- Call attention to results from a 2002 Barna Research study that revealed “a widespread sense of disappointment has reduced people’s confidence in opinion shapers and cultural influencers” (“Americans Speak: Enron, WorldCom and Others Are Result of Inadequate Moral Training By Families,” www.barna.org).

Of seven types of influencers, only teachers received votes of either “complete confidence” or “a lot of confidence” by at least half the respondents. Executives of large corporations; followed closely by the producers, directors and writers of TV and films; elected government officials and news reporters and journalists ranked at the bottom of the list.

Researcher George Barna, in his book on leadership challenges and practices, *A Fish Out of Water*, said that the chief way to gain people’s trust and confidence is by displaying strong character. Read aloud the following quote from Barna’s book and ask class members to respond to it and explain whether they agree or disagree:

“People rely upon their leaders ... to model virtuous behavior and appropriate values. By virtue of the

opportunities they encounter, every leader will be tempted to grab for power, prestige, publicity or other perks” (www.barna.org). Character, not skills and abilities, Barna said, separates good from bad leaders.

According to Barna, the esteem in which people hold many highly regarded national leaders, including the president, lies in trust in their character and moral convictions. “Skills can be learned but character is a reflection of the heart that is formed from a person’s early years and emerges as they age,” he said. “Americans are searching for leaders whose character makes them trustworthy.”

Explore the Bible

- Introduce the text by recalling for the class Solomon’s careful leadership, planning and dedication in building the temple (1 Kings 5-7). Chapter 8 records the events surrounding the dedication of the temple. At this time, Solomon prayed that both he and the people of Israel would walk according to God’s way. Recognizing that “there is no one who does not sin” (v 46), Solomon spelled out a moral pattern: sin, repentance and forgiveness.

Read aloud 1 Kings 8:22 and ask class members to give their impressions of Solomon as a leader up to this point and on this occasion in particular. Contrast Solomon’s demeanor with that of many public officials on similar occasions. Suggest that Solomon appears to have been genuinely humble before God and subjected to God, admitting his own weakness and dependence.

- Note that Solomon’s prayer of dedication for the temple begins in verse 23 and continues through verse 53. Read aloud verses 23-24; then ask:

▶ *What do Solomon’s words tell you about his understanding of God?*

▶ *How do you think Solomon saw himself in relation to God?*

▶ *How did Solomon’s understanding of God and himself affect the way he led the people?*

Note that the God of Israel was real to Solomon, and that Solomon understood God to be unique and unlike any of the gods of other groups or territories. Solomon understood the nature of the covenant between God and his father David and acknowledged that that covenant had been fulfilled on this day. Though Solomon would later break the covenant, as would the people he led, on this day he understood and was committed to walking in God’s ways, admitting failures and sins and seeking forgiveness from God when he sinned.

- Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 25-26. Note that Solomon’s prayer shifted from an acknowledgment of God’s relationship with the people in the past to the relationship of the present and the future. Solomon asked for God’s continuing presence, acknowledged the terms of the covenant and accepted his responsibility within that covenant. On this day, in a very public but humble way, Solomon acknowledged that he served at God’s pleasure.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Recall for the class the following story from Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois:

Hybels said that one time he took a group from his church to some inner-city ministries they were helping support financially and through volunteers. They went into an empty warehouse where the temperature seemed to be at least 95 degrees and the humidity was equally unbearable. The person in charge of the ministry spoke to the group and asked them to imagine a corner of that warehouse filled with electrical supplies. A skilled volunteer could come to this warehouse, get all the supplies he or she needed and then go to someone whose home needed that kind of help.

The ministry director then gestured to another corner of the warehouse and asked the group to imagine that area stacked high with drywall compound. A volunteer could stop by there, get the drywall supplies and then go to the home of someone who otherwise could not afford to patch the holes in their home's walls.

The director gestured a third time to another area of the warehouse and asked the group to envision that area stacked high with blankets. Those blankets could in turn be distributed to people in the winter when the heat in their apartments was insufficient or not working.

That warehouse was empty, but Hybels and the others in his group had no trouble envisioning every-

thing the ministry director imagined. "Leaders cast a God-honoring vision," he wrote ("5 Things Leaders Do," www.christianitytoday.com).

- Remind the class that when King David and then Solomon had the vision to build the temple, the people they led had no frame of reference in which to envision what they were talking about. Yet both were able to keep that vision alive and engage others in the process of making it become a reality.

Solomon was successful in completing the building of the temple because before he tried to lead anyone, he acknowledged his dependence on God. He committed himself and the people to walking in God's ways, according to God's commandments and statutes. Once the temple was completed, Solomon acknowledged that as he and the people continued to walk in God's ways, they would inevitably sin, but when they did, they knew to confess, repent and seek forgiveness.

- Close with prayer, committing yourselves as both leaders and followers to high moral standards that reflect God's presence and priority in your lives.

Failed Leaders Turn from God

Leaders Guide

1 Kings 11:1-13

¹King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the Israelites, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you; for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods”; Solomon clung to these in love. ³Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. ⁵For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not completely follow the LORD as his father David had done. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods. ⁹Then the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD commanded. ¹¹Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. ¹²Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³I will not, however, tear away the entire kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.”

Theme: Wise Christian leaders recognize the pitfalls of personal fatigue and take steps to guard against it.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.
- To read the entire article about Michelle Akers, whose story offers an example with which to conclude the lesson, go to:

“True Grit,” www.christianitytoday.com/tcw/2000/005/1.36.html.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Guide class members to discuss our culture’s “hurry syndrome” and resulting fatigue and sleep deprivation by asking them first to complete a pie chart to represent a typical week in their lives. If you have married couples in your class, they may prefer to work together to reflect their family’s life.

Distribute pieces of paper on which you have drawn large circles. Then give the following instructions:

Think about a typical week. Divide the chart into sectors to represent the amount of time you spend on the following each week: work; household chores and maintenance; school or continuing education; commuting, chauffeuring and carpooling; childcare, homework and children’s activities; elder care; meal preparation; running errands; church responsibilities; personal spiritual disciplines; hobbies and leisure activities; relationship-building with family and friends; volunteer and civic responsibilities;

health and physical fitness; other, miscellaneous responsibilities; sleep.

Ask class members to assign a percentage to each activity in their charts so that the total is 100%.

- Ask various individuals to explain the results of their pie chart exercise. Then ask questions such as these:

▶ *When your schedule is especially crowded and you feel overbooked, from which area of your life are you most likely to take the extra time to meet your other obligations?*

▶ *How do you manage multiple priorities and schedules?*

▶ *How many hours' sleep per night do you average?*

▶ *How often do you feel completely exhausted?*

▶ *How often do you feel fatigued and generally tired?*

▶ *What evidences do you observe to let you know that you are overbooked, under-rested and stressed? How do you respond physically? Mentally? Emotionally? Spiritually?*

Call attention to some of the following results from the 2001 Sleep in America poll conducted by the National Sleep Foundation (www.wellnesstoday.com/sleep_deprived.htm):

▶ Forty percent of surveyed adults said they have trouble staying awake on the job and their work suffers at least a few days each month. Twenty-two percent indicated that the resulting problems surface a few days each week.

▶ Sixty-three percent of Americans get less than 8 hours of sleep each night, and 31 percent get less than 7 hours.

▶ Survey respondents work an average of 46 hours each week. Thirty-eight percent of those surveyed said that they work 60 hours or more each week.

▶ Fifty-three percent of those surveyed admitted that they “drive drowsy.” Nineteen percent revealed that they have actually fallen asleep while driving.

▶ Forty-three percent indicated that they use caffeine to stay awake during the day, and 5% said they go for something stronger, such as medications.

▶ Not surprisingly, adults with children get less sleep than those without children.

- Suggest that while many people are exhausted from time to time and suffer from occasional lack of sleep, those in leadership roles are especially at risk. Physical fatigue is but one consequence of our culture’s “hurry syndrome.” Fatigue also affects people mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Fatigue can result in pessimism, sadness and anger and can create serious relational and social problems. It can adversely affect the brain’s ability to control speech, access memory and solve problems.

Wise leaders recognize the pitfalls of fatigue and take steps to guard against it. Wise followers are committed to helping their leaders take care of themselves.

Explore the Bible

- Read aloud 1 Kings 11:1-2 and note the immediacy with which scripture records Solomon's failure to abide by God's instructions concerning marriage to "foreign women." Then ask:

▶ *Why did God prohibit such marriages?*

Then ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 11:3-6 and note particularly verse 4. Lead the class to discuss Solomon's leadership decline by asking such questions as:

▶ *What led Solomon to 'turn away his heart' and follow other gods?*

▶ *What is significant about the word "old"? Do advanced years automatically result in a decline in leadership skills and ability to focus? Why did this happen in Solomon's case?*

Note that verse 6 indicates that Solomon "did not completely follow the LORD." Then ask:

▶ *Can you follow God only partially? Why or why not?*

▶ *What happens to leaders whose spiritual loyalty is divided? What could happen if leaders remained totally committed to God and God's plan?*

- Read aloud 1 Kings 11:7-8 and note that Solomon's spiritual commitment was so divided that he was no longer able to resist the influence of his wives. He went so far as to build worship sites so that they and he could worship pagan gods. Point out that Solomon's earlier leadership skills in building and sustaining the nation appear to have slipped markedly. The man who earlier had exhibited exceptional military and economic leadership is now weak and anemic.

- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 11:9-10; then ask:

▶ *Why was God angry? What actually provoked his wrath?*

▶ *What had Solomon's actions done to his relationship with God?*

▶ *How had Solomon's actions affected his influence? his ability to lead? his ability to make decisions?*

Read aloud 1 Kings 11:11-13 and ask:

▶ *What did God promise to do as a result of Solomon's disobedience?*

▶ *Why do you think God delayed the punishment?*

▶ *What do you think was Solomon's immediate response to God's promise of punishment? Do you think he changed his loyalties, commitments and worship practices?*

- Point out that the biblical portrait of Solomon is of a leader who was originally committed to Yahweh and Yahweh’s plans but whose commitment slipped after he had been on the job for many years. Once a leader who sought to discern and practice God’s wisdom and for whom worship and high moral standards were priorities, Solomon at the end of his life is portrayed as fatigued, weak and having divided spiritual loyalties.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Cite the following example:

Michelle Akers became practically a household name following her role in helping lead her U.S. soccer teammates to victories in Women’s World Cup and Olympic championships. Her biggest opponent, however, has come off the playing field.

After three years of unexplained and debilitating fatigue, she was diagnosed in 1994 with Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome. Her symptoms have included blurred vision, muscle weakness, lightheadedness, gastrointestinal problems, night sweats, inability to concentrate, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, migraine headaches and numerous colds. At her worst, she was barely able to function or get out of bed.

The diagnosis forced her to look closely at her life and her priorities and led her to return to her faith commitment to Christ, which she had first professed as a teenager. “Through this illness, I’ve discovered my athletic ability isn’t the most important thing about me; it’s my relationship with Jesus Christ—

and that can never be shaken,” she said in an interview (“True Grit,” www.christianitytoday.com/tcw/2000/005/1.36.html).

With proper diagnosis and treatment, her symptoms are under control, allowing her to do the things she loves to do. She has learned, she says, to listen to her body and give it what it asks for in terms of rest and proper nutrition.

“I’ve also learned I only have so much energy, so I have to make the most out of that and choose the best—not the good, the *best*. That forces me to say ‘no’ to a lot of things. . . . I know what I want to accomplish, so I post my goals on my bulletin board right in front of me. Then I ask myself, *Does this commitment fit in? or, Will this involvement take me away from the relationships on which I need to spend my time and energy? Will I become exhausted from it?*”

Knowing her priorities and keeping them in focus takes tremendous pressure off of her, Akers says. “The crux of my perseverance has nothing to do with the physical—it’s all spiritual. It’s based on my faith in Christ—the cornerstone of everything. . . . Life is uncertain. That’s why faith has to be the constant. That’s why it’s important to be serious about where you are spiritually.”

- Note that while Akers’ condition is extreme, many leaders occasionally deal with some of the same symptoms. Her advice is pertinent to every leader, as well as every follower of Christ. In addition to its physical symptoms, fatigue opens the door to loss of commitment, temptation and failure, as the end of Solomon’s life demonstrates.

- Close with prayer, asking God to help you monitor the fatigue factor in your lives. Pray for leaders, that they will recognize the symptoms of fatigue and take the necessary steps to curtail it. Pray for followers to support their leaders as they maintain physical, mental, emotional and spiritual balance.

Failed Leaders Ignore the People Leaders Guide

1 Kings 12:1-15

¹Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. ²When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt. ³And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, ⁴“Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you.” ⁵He said to them, “Go away for three days, then come again to me.” So the people went away. ⁶Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the older men who had attended his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, “How do you advise me to answer this people?” ⁷They answered him, “If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.” ⁸But he disregarded the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him. ⁹He said to them, “What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us’?” ¹⁰The young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus you should say to this people who spoke to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must lighten it for us’; thus you should say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins. ¹¹Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’” ¹²So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said, “Come to me again the third day.” ¹³The king answered the people harshly. He disregarded the advice that the older men had given him ¹⁴and spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” ¹⁵So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

Theme: Wise leaders listen to their people and seek the wisdom of those with broader experiences and diverse opinions.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Begin by asking the class to list things they know about Kim Jong Il, the dictator of North Korea. Supplement their observations with your own and the following as necessary:

Kim Jong Il has a reputation for being reclusive and acting irrationally and unpredictably. The people in his impoverished nation live every day with brain-washing, brutality, repression and a fanatical military. Kim and the other government officials maintain apparently no contact with the citizens and little contact with the outside world. His only “interaction” with average citizens of his country seems to be on ceremonial occasions, where he stands high above Pyongyang’s main square, looking down as soldiers and armored vehicles pass below.

Lee Chung Min, an associate professor of international relations at Yonsei University in Seoul, said that Kim “is a ruthless, powerful leader, who ultimately holds the destiny of North Korea, and by extension, how peace or war could come to the

Korean Peninsula” (“Who Is Kim Jong Il?,” www.abcnews.com).

Lee and others who have observed and met Kim believe that even though he appears to be acting irrationally, he has a definite strategy in place. Many of them believe that his unpredictability is North Korea’s most powerful weapon.

Kim seemed to change somewhat in the 1990s when he allowed foreign aid organizations to help feed the starving people in his nation, even though that meant that the sights and stories of the country’s famine were broadcast around the world. He went to Beijing to meet with Chinese leader Jiang Zemin and even held a summit meeting with South Korea’s president, Kim Dae-jung.

Kim’s perceived willingness to talk with those beyond his tight inner circle was short-lived, however. In more recent years he has again closed ranks and begun to project his earlier, unpredictable and irrational image.

- Suggest that while Kim Jong Il currently remains in firm control of North Korea, he is hardly a successful leader. His strategy of ignoring the people is a recipe for failure. Leaders who rely only on their own judgment or on the judgment of a small inner circle cannot expect loyalty, trust or respect from the people they lead. Their leadership is based on control, manipulation and fear. Their narrow worldview represents a lack of wisdom and an unwillingness to learn from the experiences of others.

While many experts warn against measuring a person's leadership potential against a "laundry list" of qualities, few would argue that careful listening to a variety of people is essential.

Ronald Heifetz is considered one of the world's leading authorities on leadership and serves as director of the Leadership Education Project at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He believes that while leaders provide direction, they hardly have all the answers. Instead, they often ask well-developed questions instead of trying to provide definitive answers all of the time. Conflict, he believes, is "the primary engine of creativity and innovation. People don't learn by staring into a mirror; people learn by encountering difference" (www.fastcompany.com/magazine/25/heifetz.html).

Heifetz recalled that in the mid-1990s, Bill Gates decided that the Internet was not going to be all that important and made some business decisions based on that assumption. But the people he listened to contradicted his decision, and he changed his decision based on what they said. It turns out those people were right.

Explore the Bible

- Introduce the text by setting the stage. Read aloud 1 Kings 12:1-2. King Solomon had died, so a transition in power was underway. Solomon's son Rehoboam was heir to the throne, but Jeroboam, Rehoboam's half-brother, had power plans of his own. In an effort to gain backing from Jeroboam's supporters, Rehoboam decided to move his coronation ceremony to Shechem. He knew that if he could

get the support of this group, he would have little trouble gaining support from the other tribal groups.

From the beginning, Rehoboam was faced with requests, advice and opinions from various groups that led to difficult situations.

- Note that 1 Kings 12:3-11 describes Rehoboam's encounters with three different groups of people. In each case, he had opportunities to listen, consider opinions different from his own and respond.

Guide class members to examine closely Rehoboam's conversations and their results by assigning each person to one of the three encounters. Your class may prefer to gather in groups according to their assigned encounters, or individuals may prefer to work alone. Provide the following guidelines:

Encounter 1: Read 1 Kings 12:3-5 and the related information in the Students Guide. Then explore answers to these questions:

▶ *Who were the key participants in the dialogue with Rehoboam?*

▶ *What was the subject of the conversation? What was behind the people's request?*

▶ *How did Rehoboam respond? How would you have responded in this situation?*

Encounter 2: Read 1 Kings 12:6-7 and the related information in the Students Guide. Then explore answers to these questions:

▶ *Who were the key participants in the dialogue with Rehoboam?*

▶ *What was the subject of the conversation?*

▶ *Do you think the motives of the older men were pure? If not, what was really behind their response?*

Encounter 3: Read 1 Kings 12:8-11 and the related information in the Students Guide. Then explore answers to these questions:

▶ *Who were the key participants in the dialogue with Rehoboam?*

▶ *What advice did the younger men give Rehoboam?*

▶ *How would you have responded if you had been one of the younger men? How would you have responded if you had been in Rehoboam's position?*

- After several minutes, ask volunteers representing each encounter to summarize their findings. Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 12:12-15; then ask:

▶ *What was Rehoboam's ultimate decision?*

▶ *What were the results of this decision?*

▶ *At what points did Rehoboam go wrong as a leader? What might he have done differently?*

Stress that as a result of Rehoboam's actions, the kingdom fell.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Note that transitions in power, whether they are in government, business, church or families offer opportunities for teamwork, communication, humility and sacrifice, all for the common good and shared vision. They also can be characterized by struggles for control and competing interests.

Suggest that a leader's vision is closely tied to his or her ability to listen. "Most leaders die with their mouths open," Ronald Heifetz said. "Leaders must know how to listen—and the art of listening is more subtle than most people think it is. But first, and just as important, leaders must want to listen. Good listening is fueled by curiosity and empathy: What's really happening here? Can I put myself in someone else's shoes? It's hard to be a great listener if you're not interested in other people" (www.fastcompany.com/magazine/25/heifetz.html).

- Lead your class to apply in practical ways the important role listening plays for leaders. Ask them, from their perspectives as both leaders and followers, to develop a list of guidelines or suggestions for better listening. Write their suggestions on a board or chart. Supplement class discussion with ideas such as these (see "Keep Your Ears Open," www.abcnews.com):

▶ Devote undivided attention to what others say. Avoid jumping ahead to what you will say next.

▶ Ask questions of others rather than giving answers.

▶ Approach conversations with the attitude that you

can learn something from what others have to say. You don't have to be "the teacher" all of the time.

- ▶ Maintain direct eye contact with people.
 - ▶ Become comfortable with moments of silence. Sometimes both you and the others involved need time to think about what they and you have said.
 - ▶ Occasionally repeat aloud what others have said to confirm your understanding. Ask them if you have understood correctly, and allow them to elaborate and clarify.
 - ▶ Respond, don't react. Stop and think before you speak, especially when others are upset, critical, angry or combative. Select your words purposefully and carefully so that you won't later regret them.
 - ▶ Conclude conversations by agreeing on next steps, if they are necessary. Make certain everyone understands expectations and conclusions.
- Close with prayer, asking God to enable you to become better listeners, leaders and followers, open to the advice and wisdom of others.

Failed Leaders Create False Gods Leaders Guide

1 Kings 12:25-33

²⁵Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and resided there; he went out from there and built Penuel.

²⁶Then Jeroboam said to himself, "Now the kingdom may well revert to the house of David. ²⁷If this people continues to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will turn again to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah."²⁸So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. He said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."²⁹He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. ³⁰And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one at Bethel and before the other as far as Dan. ³¹He also made houses on high places, and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not Levites. ³²Jeroboam appointed a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the festival that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar; so he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. ³³He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he alone had devised; he appointed a festival for the people of Israel, and he went up to the altar to offer incense.

Theme: Wise leaders resist the temptation to create false gods for their followers to worship, instead leading them to worship God alone and trust God with the future.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.

- Refresh your memory of Sinclair Lewis' 1927 novel *Elmer Gantry* and plan to use the title character to help introduce the lesson.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Begin by asking class members who have read Sinclair Lewis' novel *Elmer Gantry* to summarize the story. Supplement their comments with your own observations and the following:

Elmer Gantry is set in the early decades of the 20th century, well before the age of televangelism. But the character Elmer and some well-known televangelists appear to have a lot in common.

Elmer started his ministerial career as a greedy Baptist minister and later became the leader of a large Methodist church. His 'career' was evidently only the platform for his other pursuits: womanizing and making money. He was the classical hypocrite, practicing what he preached against and expressing sorrow for his sins only if caught. Elmer loved the thrill of public speaking and was a great self-promoter. He was likable enough to convince people to listen to him and follow him.

- Suggest that the fictional Elmer Gantry was a prophetic forerunner to unscrupulous televangelists and other ministers who, rather than trusting and worshipping God alone, create and present false gods for people to follow.

Recall for class members the rise and fall of Baton Rouge-based televangelist Jimmy Swaggart in the

late 1980s. In 1987, Swaggart denounced fellow ministers Jim Bakker and Marvin Gorman for their extramarital affairs. On February 21, 1988, Swaggart admitted that he had engaged in improper conduct with a prostitute. Ironically, Gorman hired the private detective who took the incriminating photographs of Swaggart and a known prostitute entering a motel outside of New Orleans.

Just prior to his downfall, his Swaggart Ministries drew in almost \$100 million annually, money taken from the faithful who believed he was genuine and trusted what he said.

Swaggart departed the pulpit only briefly. His Jimmy Swaggart Ministries Web site today boasts that the Jimmy Swaggart Telecast airs in over 50 countries; his SonLife Radio airs 24 hours a day on over 60 stations. In addition to being an "Anointed Minister," the Web site claims Swaggart is one of the best-selling gospel musicians of all time, with more than 15 million recordings sold worldwide. The online gift catalog offers "weekly specials"; cassettes and CDs; music, preaching and prophecy videos; books and study guides; teaching tapes; items for children; jewelry; and Swaggart's own line of Bible commentary.

Ask:

► *What do you think motivates ministers and other religious leaders, some of whom may start out with pure motives and a true sense of calling, to create their own false gods?*

► *To what do you attribute the "success" of these leaders?*

► *What prompts people to believe in and follow the false gods these leaders create?*

Explore the Bible

- Introduce the character Jeroboam by reminding the class of how he came into power:

Jeroboam was the first king of Israel's Northern Kingdom after the Davidic kingdom divided. The prophet Ahijah had earlier announced that God would take a large part of Israel from the control of David's dynasty and give it to Jeroboam. After that, Jeroboam fled to Egypt in fear of his life and stayed there until Solomon's death (1 Kings 11:29-40). After he returned, and following the arrogant and unwise actions of King Rehoboam, the ten northern tribes of Israel named Jeroboam their king.

- Read aloud 1 Kings 12:25-27; then ask:
► *What was Jeroboam afraid of? Why?*

Remind the class that the magnificent temple Solomon built was located in Jerusalem, in Israel's Southern kingdom, now ruled by Rehoboam. Jeroboam feared that if he didn't provide his people in the north with some impressive worship sites of their own, they would transfer their loyalties to his rival, Rehoboam. Though he would claim that the sites he constructed were for religious purposes, Jeroboam's motives were not really that pure. He intended to establish his own solid kingdom in the North.

- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 12:28-30. Then ask:

► *What did Jeroboam do? Under what pretenses?*

Point out that Jeroboam's concern and motives sounded sincere to the people. He was only trying to make life easier for them, after all. Wasn't he being a good and thoughtful king?

Remind the class that both Dan and Bethel were historically and spiritually significant for the people of Israel, so they would not have had any reason to question what Jeroboam did or suspect that it was intended for anything other than the worship of Yahweh. At first, the golden calves probably did serve as symbols of Yahweh's presence with the people. But point out verse 30 and note that "this thing became a sin." The golden calves grew to become associated with Canaanite fertility and Baal worship and would later be condemned by Hosea as idolatry.

Stress that, instead of drawing people closer to Yahweh, the golden calves drew people further and further away from their worship of Yahweh and led to their worship and service of false gods like Baal. Jeroboam was afraid of the future. Instead of trusting God, he took matters into his own hands and led his people down a dangerous and ungodly path.

- Read aloud 1 Kings 12:31-33. Point out that the two golden calves Jeroboam constructed for the people were only the beginning of many other violations he would commit: non-centralized sacrifice, worship of images, non-Levitical priests, holding the Feast of Booths in a different month.

Point out the phrases “that he had made” and “that he had alone devised” (vv 32, 33), that indicate Jeroboam acted alone and apart from God’s wisdom. Jeroboam would become the sin gauge by which future kings of the northern kingdom would be judged.

Remind the class that followers have a responsibility, too, to know God and God’s ways well enough to understand when they are being misguided.

- Close with prayer, acknowledging that God alone is worthy of our trust for the future.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Recall for the class the 1992 movie “Leap of Faith,” one of the more recent in a genre of films about evangelical con artists. “The Rainmaker,” released in 1956, starred Burt Lancaster and Katharine Hepburn. “Elmer Gantry,” released in 1960, also starred Lancaster and was based on the Sinclair Lewis novel by the same name.

In “Leap of Faith,” Steve Martin plays Jonas Nightengale, a scheming “evangelist” who settles in Rustwater, Kansas, after one of his vans breaks down there. Rustwater is a small farming town that has been hit hard by drought, and Jonas sees this as his opportunity to earn a quick profit from people looking for hope. Though the town’s sheriff urges him to move on, Jonas nonetheless stays and is able to convince the people of his powers due to help from some assistants who scour the town for information and gossip and his manager who uses a radio transmitter to provide him with cues.

Suggest that like Jeroboam, leaders today face the temptation to create and follow false gods such as the stock market, personal ego, power, sex, control, leisure, wealth and any number of other things. As both films and recent history reveal, spiritual leaders are not immune from creating and following such lifeless but harmful gods.

Failed Leaders Reject Truthful Messages

Leaders Guide

1 Kings 22:1-40

⁴He said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I am as you are; my people are your people, my horses are your horses." ⁵But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "Inquire first for the word of the LORD." ⁶Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred of them, and said to them, "Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" They said, "Go up; for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king." ⁷But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no other prophet of the LORD here of whom we may inquire?" ⁸The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one other by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies anything favorable about me, but only disaster." ⁹Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah." ... ¹⁴But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak." ... ^{34a}But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. ... ^{37a}So the king died ...

Theme: Wise leaders understand the value of critics and truthful messages, and downplay the adulation of the crowds.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Lead your class to think about the value of critics and criticism by relating the following:

Tom Iseghohi grew up in Nigeria where he helped his mother run a construction business. After receiving his MBA, in 1989 he joined Ford Motor Company, working in their finance operation. After only 2 ½ years, he joined Pepsi-Cola in a position that offered him diverse assignments from sales to product engineering. By 1997, he reported directly to that company's chief financial officer.

Iseghohi left Ford because it was, at the time, no place for someone with an entrepreneurial spirit, unafraid to challenge the status quo, push the envelope and ask the hard questions.

He eventually returned to Ford. "I was convinced that Ford's top leaders were serious about change," he said. "They understood what it took to attract someone like me. Talented people don't want an easy slam-dunk; they want a challenge. They're passionate about winning, and they want the people around them to share that passion. To be a successful entrepreneur, you must accept risk. You have to be comfortable standing on the precipice asking, 'Why not?'" ("Grassroots Leadership-Ford Motor Co.," www.fastcompany.com/magazine/33/ford.html).

Suggest that at this point in its history, Ford Motor Company had evidently learned not only to listen to criticism but also to value it, not just from its customers and competitors, but from employees as well.

- Apply the above example from the business world to the arenas in which Christian leaders and followers have influence.

Ask:

- ▶ *What is your first reaction when someone offers “constructive criticism” to you?*
- ▶ *In which areas of your life are you most apt to be open to criticism (family, relationships, work, church, etc.)?*
- ▶ *In which areas of your life do you find it most difficult to listen objectively to criticism?*
- ▶ *How often do you offer an opposing opinion or constructive criticism?*
- ▶ *What is the normal reaction of those to whom you express an opposing opinion or offer criticism?*

- Stress that one of the things wise leaders guard against is the seduction of hearing only good news. Instead, they learn to listen to their critics and evaluate their opinions. To do that, they surround themselves not with people who will tell them only what they want to hear, but with women and men who are unafraid to speak frankly and openly about their convictions. They listen to the people like Tom Iseghohi who dare to ask “Why?” or “Why not?” Whether we are a leader or a follower, we have a responsibility both to listen to criticism objectively and to offer it in a spirit of furthering the common good.

Leadership expert Ronald Heifetz of Harvard University warns that grandiosity is the enemy of leaders who want to listen effectively. “Leaders need to check their sense of self-importance,” he said. Grandiosity does not always arise from bad inten-

tions, however. “It usually grows out of the normal human need to feel important. I don’t know any human being who doesn’t want to feel important, who doesn’t want to matter to other people. And those of us who have a strong need to be needed . . . spend our lives solving other people’s problems. It makes us feel needed . . . But that orientation creates its own kind of problem. The more we demonstrate our capacity to take problems off other people’s shoulders, the more authority we gain in their eyes—until, finally, we become a senior executive or a CEO. And, by then, the tracks have been laid so deeply inside our brain that it becomes hard to stand back, hard to listen, hard to learn from others” (“The Leader of the Future,” www.fastcompany.com/magazine/25/heifetz.html).

Explore the Bible

- Introduce the text by relating the following information about King Ahab:

King Ahab ruled over Israel’s Northern Kingdom for two decades. He was married to Jezebel, a Phoenician who was an enthusiastic Baal worshiper and who energetically pushed this worship into the lives of the Israelites. Ahab was both a military leader of some renown and a leader in the construction of cities, but his rule was noted more for the havoc wreaked by the Baal-worship introduced by his wife.

Point out that the Northern Kingdom had enjoyed under Ahab three years of peace (1 Kings 22:1), but Ahab rather quickly and without discussion or debate decided that it was again time to go to war, this time over Ramoth-gilead.

Read aloud 1 Kings 22:4-5. Note that Ahab enlisted Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to help him in this venture. Jehoshaphat met Ahab on Ahab's turf and at his request and seemed to be in a secondary position to Ahab. Jehoshaphat quickly agreed to go into battle with Ahab, with only one request: he wanted Ahab to get a message from the Lord about the idea.

Suggest that the people of the Northern Kingdom probably fell quickly in behind Ahab and his decision to go to war, though the text does not indicate that he counted the cost of his aggression. As their leader, he was able to stir their national pride and convince them that this war was the right thing to do.

Lead your class to discuss Ahab's decisions to this point by asking:

- ▶ *With whom did Ahab consult about his decision to go to war?*
- ▶ *At what point did the idea of the counsel of God enter the picture?*
- ▶ *Why do you think Ahab agreed to consult the prophets about his decision?*
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 22:6-9; then ask:
 - ▶ *What was the advice of the 400 prophets Ahab gathered for consultation?*
 - ▶ *What do you think their motives were in rubber-stamping the king's decision?*

▶ *Why do you think Jehoshaphat pressed Ahab to ask for another prophet's opinion?*

▶ *Who in this situation showed godly wisdom and leadership?*

Note Ahab's reaction to the idea of consulting with the prophet Micaiah. Then call attention to 1 Kings 22:13-18. Note verse 13 and point out that the messenger who had been sent to retrieve Micaiah tried to persuade him to go along with what the other 400 prophets had said. Then ask:

▶ *What was Micaiah's response to the messenger?*

▶ *How do you interpret Micaiah's reply to the king's question about the decision to go into battle?*

▶ *How did Ahab take Micaiah's reply?*

Suggest that Micaiah was in a no-win situation. Ahab didn't believe him when he sarcastically suggested he would win the battle, nor did he believe him when he told him the truth about the battle. Still, he spoke "the word of the LORD."

- Note that Ahab had Micaiah put into prison while he went off to fight his battle, perhaps in an attempt to silence him from speaking out against the war. Still, Ahab remembered what Micaiah had said. On the outside chance that he might be right, Ahab got Jehoshaphat to wear his distinguished-looking kingly garb, while he dressed as a common soldier. The Syrian soldiers had been instructed to track down and kill Israel's king. Ahab thought he was safe.

Point out how Ahab's unhappy story ends. The enemy soldiers spotted who they thought was the king because of the royal attire, but when they got closer, they realized it was not Ahab, so they retreated. Meanwhile, "a certain man . . . unknowingly" (v 34) struck Ahab with his arrow. Ahab died as a result.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Note that had Ahab been a wise leader, he would have learned to listen to the voices of critics like Micaiah and his life would have been spared. His decision-making process was flawed from the outset. He consulted with no one, not even God. He did not entertain any opposing views. When pressed to seek "a word from the LORD," he gathered his "yes-men," those he knew would support his decision. He went headstrong into battle in spite of the brave warning from God's prophet, the lone voice of dissent.

Remind the class that we can learn leadership lessons not only from Ahab but also from Jehoshaphat. It was he who advised seeking God's guidance in the important and costly decision about going to war.

- Admit that taking criticism and listening to dissenting voices is seldom easy. Yet in those voices often lies a grain of truth, or sometimes the whole truth, as in the case of Micaiah.

Lead your class members to develop some guidelines for both offering and accepting criticism. Ask them first to put themselves in the position of being the one who will receive the criticism and suggest

how they would want to hear information that might contradict their opinion, be perceived as negative or prove that they are wrong.

Next, ask them to put themselves in the position of one who will offer criticism and suggest ways they might do that positively and effectively.

Write class members' suggestions and guidelines on the board, supplementing them with ideas such as these:

Accepting Criticism

- Expect criticism when you are in a leadership position. Every decision will likely make some people happy and others unhappy.
- Assume that the person offering the criticism is sincere and wants to help. Get to know people well enough that you know where they are coming from with their criticisms and opinions.
- Listen carefully to make certain you understand the nature of the criticism, feedback, input or opinion.
- Learn to weigh criticism objectively. Assume at first that it is neither right nor wrong. Listen even to the lone voice of dissent, but also listen to the experiences and opinions of others, as well as your own, to test the validity of the one dissenting opinion.
- Invite constructive criticism. Give people permission to offer differing viewpoints and opinions. Create a climate in which constructive feedback is an anticipated occurrence.

- Admit it when you're wrong.
- Avoid seeking revenge. Be tolerant.
- Avoid becoming passive in your acceptance of criticism. Dialogue with the person. Maintain your self-confidence.

Offering Criticism

- Be specific and clear. Avoid being vague.
- If you raise a problem, offer a solution.
- Offer criticism sincerely and in an effort to improve things.
- Avoid personal attacks. Address issues and situations, not personalities.
- Express both what you like and what you don't like, what you see as positive as well as the negative you perceive.
- Avoid automatically assuming you are right and the other person is wrong. Sometimes you may both be right.
- Close with prayer, asking God to enable you to avoid the temptation of playing to the crowds. Pray that as you both lead, you will have the wisdom to listen to critics who speak the truth. Pray that as you follow, you will have the courage to be the lone voice of dissent when it means revealing the truth.

Experiencing Burnout Leaders Guide

1 Kings 19

¹Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow."³Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. ⁴But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."⁵Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat."⁶He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you."⁸He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"¹⁰He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."¹¹He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by. Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;¹²and after the earthquake a fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"¹⁴He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone

am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. ¹⁶Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. ¹⁷Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. ¹⁸Yet will I leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” ¹⁹So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. ²⁰He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, “Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” Then Elijah said to him, “Go back again; for what have I done to you?” ²¹He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

Theme: Wise leaders recognize their vulnerability to burnout.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Read aloud the following scenarios in succession, without comment. If you prefer, photocopy them ahead of time and distribute them among class members to read.

Scenario 1

John took the fast track through high school, graduating at the age of 16. With a college diploma in hand by the time he was 19, he immediately entered graduate school, where he quickly earned his MBA. Courted by a number of Fortune 500 companies, he soon accepted a high-level position in one of them, where he climbed the corporate ladder with the same speed he had completed his education. At the age of 30, he manages a large staff, occupies a coveted corner office, reports directly to the CEO and commands a six-figure salary. Normally quite health- and fitness-conscious, lately he has slept through his 4:30 A.M. alarm that would send him racing to the gym. In spite of the extra sleep, he can barely drag himself out of bed each morning. Once at work, he has difficulty concentrating and often falls asleep during meetings.

Scenario 2

Margaret wistfully watched her youngest child leave for college but quickly set about redecorating her house and continuing the full slate of civic and volunteer responsibilities she had held for a number of years. When her widowed mother’s health began to decline quickly, she moved her into her home and assumed full responsibility for her care. After her husband’s long-time administrative assistant retired, she began working half-days at the business her husband owns. A school board member’s sudden job transfer left a vacancy, and numerous friends and supporters coerced her into running to fill that position. She won by a wide margin and added yet another responsibility to her already overcrowded resume. Lately she finds herself wide awake at 2 A.M., unable to go back to sleep, pacing the floor or staring at the clock. Her appetite has all but disap-

peared, and friends regularly comment that a strong wind will blow her away. She frequently finds herself apologizing to her husband for a snappy comment or sarcastic remark.

Scenario 3

Donald had worked for the same company for over 40 years, joining them directly out of college. He was a loyal, dedicated employee who seldom missed work due to illness and rarely took all of his available vacation. What times he was not at work, it seemed, he was at the church he and his wife had joined shortly after they married. He served as a deacon, chair of the personnel committee, member of the building and grounds committee and sang in the choir. After his wife died suddenly following a stroke, he threw himself even more completely into his job and church responsibilities. When his company was bought out by a larger interest, things at work grew increasingly uncomfortable for him and some of the older workers. Finally he accepted the new company's offer for early retirement, took his severance package and went home to an empty house. He has difficulty deciding what to do each day, and evenings are almost unbearable. He has gone on a couple of day trips with the senior adult group from church, but he feels out of place without his wife and companion of 40 years. There's only so much maintenance work he can do at home and at church, and daytime television seems silly and mindless to him. His children are nearby, so they visit regularly, but they are busy with their own children and jobs. Occasionally he wonders if it would matter much if he were no longer around.

- After all three scenarios have been read, ask:

▶ *How would you characterize each of these people?*

▶ *Do they have anything in common? If so, what?*

▶ *If you were in a position to advise each of them, what would you suggest that they do?*

Suggest that while each of these individuals is at a different age and stage in life and each has a different set of circumstances, each seems to be plummeting on a downward spiral toward burnout and possible depression. Note that leaders in every arena are subject to burnout. Wise leaders recognize their vulnerability and take steps to guard against it.

Explore the Bible

- Set the stage for the study of 1 Kings 19 by briefly reviewing the events in Elijah's life leading up to this point. Use the information in the Students Guide and the related scripture to recall events such as:

Elijah's prediction of the drought (1 Kings 17:1-7);

Elijah's miracle at the home of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-16);

Elijah's miracle in reviving the widow's son (1 Kings 17:17-24);

Elijah's message to Ahab (1 Kings 18:1-17);

Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40);

The end of the drought (1 Kings 18:41-46).

- Read aloud 1 Kings 1:1-3a. Note Jezebel's response to Ahab's account of the events at Mount Carmel and Elijah's response to her message. Remind the class that Jezebel likely meant what she said. She earlier had prophets of the LORD killed (18:4,13).

Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 19:3b-7 and lead the class to discuss the sequence of events by asking such questions as:

- ▶ *What was Elijah's mental and emotional state?*
- ▶ *What did he ask of God?*
- ▶ *What did he mean when he said, "I am no better than my ancestors" (v 4)?*
- ▶ *What did God do for Elijah?*

Note that Elijah displayed many of the classical signs of depression: he ran from his problems; wanted to die; slept a great deal; had to be told to eat and expressed feelings of failure. Also point out that, in spite of Elijah's deep self-pity, God met his needs and gave him what he needed.

- Ask class members to locate 1 Kings 19:8-18 in their Bibles and follow along as you read aloud and ask them to comment on various verses. Supplement their input with the following observations as necessary:

Verse 8: Elijah's destination was Horeb, which is another name for Mount Sinai, where Moses had earlier encountered God in an unmistakable way.

Verse 9: God knew Elijah was there and spoke to him by name.

Verse 10: Elijah's self-pity continued, and his perception of reality was skewed. He was not alone in his faithfulness to God, and his assertion that the people had killed God's prophets was unsubstantiated.

Verses 11-12: God provided a number of signs normally associated with the power and visible appearance of the divine, yet Elijah did not find God in any of these. Then there was silence.

Verses 13-14: Elijah knew he was in God's presence. God spoke to him again, just as he had in verse 9. Elijah replied to God in exactly the same way he had earlier.

Verse 15: God gave Elijah clear instructions about what he should do next.

- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 19:19-21. Point out that though what Elijah did seems strange to us, Elisha evidently understood the gesture and knew that it meant that he was being entrusted with prophetic leadership. He would eventually take Elijah's place.

Point out that God knew what Elijah needed throughout this difficult time in his life and continually met his needs. Though Elijah engaged in self-pity much of the time, God still talked with him and listened to him, leading him out of his depressed state and showing him how the prophetic work would continue under new leadership.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Suggest that leadership is difficult not only for leaders but also for followers. Leaders who stay the course for the long haul do what is necessary to maintain personal stamina and passion and help instill those values in the people they lead.

Harvard University's Ronald Heifetz asserts that leaders "need a sanctuary, a place where they can go to get back in touch with the worth of their life and the worth of their work" (www.fastcompany.com/magazine/25/heifetz.html). By this he does not necessarily mean a physical place, or even an extended sabbatical leave. "I'm talking about practical sanctuaries—daily moments that function as sanctuaries," he said.

Heifetz explained that he has a rabbi friend who sends a daily email message containing interpretation of one word from the Bible. As he reads his other email messages each day, he also takes time to read this message. "It roots me in a different reality, a different source of meaning."

Each person must find his or her own particular "sanctuary," Heifetz believes, and we must avoid the temptation to treat these as expendable luxuries. They are instead necessities.

"I live in Boston," he said. "No one would live in Boston without owning a winter coat. But countless people think that they can exercise leadership without partners or without a sanctuary. To stay alive as leaders—to tend the wounds that we inevitably receive when we raise tough questions—requires

maintaining these structures in our lives" (www.fastcompany.com/magazine/25/heifetz.html).

- Close with prayer, thanking God for divine provision and continuing presence in your lives. Ask God to help you prioritize your lives and balance them to manage stress and avoid burnout, making you more effective leaders and followers.

Passing Along the Leadership Mantle Leaders Guide

2 Kings 2:1-18

¹Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.

²Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

³The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."⁴Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. ⁵The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."⁶Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. ⁷Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground. ⁹When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit."¹⁰He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not."¹¹As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹²Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. ¹³He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of

Elijah?" When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. ¹⁵When the company of prophets who were at Jericho saw him at a distance, they declared, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." They came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. ¹⁶They said to him, "See now, we have fifty strong men among your servants; please let them go and seek your master; it may be that the spirit of the LORD has caught him up and thrown him down on some mountain or into some valley." He responded, "No, do not send them" ¹⁷But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, "Send them." So they sent fifty men who searched for three days but did not find him. ¹⁸When they came back to him (he had remained at Jericho), he said to them, "Did I not say to you, Do not go?"

Theme: Wise leaders know both when to accept the mantle of leadership and when to pass it along to someone else.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.
- Review the following online article as you prepare concluding comments that will help class members apply the truths of this scripture:

"Executive Coaching," (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=3168).

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Begin by relating the following analogy from Gordon MacKenzie, longtime creative director at Hallmark, from his book *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*:

“My last boss at Hallmark, a fellow by the name of Bob Kipp, sat at the wheel of one of the corporate speedboats. I was at the end of a towline on water skis. We spent our time together skimming across the great Lake Hallmark. Kipp was so sure of who he was and why he was where he was and where the power was that he was not threatened at all when I would ski around in a wide arc until I was up even with the boat and sometimes even past it. He knew I was not going to start pulling the boat with him in it. It just doesn’t work that way. The power remains in the boat. But, in allowing me to ski past him—in a sense, allowing me to lead—he would unleash in me an excitement about our enterprise that served our shared goals” (“Unleashing the Leaders Around You,” www.christianitytoday.com).

- Suggest that developing new leaders and subsequent leadership transitions, whether they are in business, education, church, civic or volunteer arenas, are delicate at best and often fraught with land mines. Resentment, unwillingness to let go, old loyalties, rivalry, lack of respect, manipulation, unresolved issues and numerous other realities present both old and new leaders, as well as those they lead, with opportunities either to respond with grace and creativity or with resistance and anger.

Engage the class in discussion about leadership transitions they have navigated by asking such questions as:

- ▶ *What were the circumstances of the leadership change?*
- ▶ *What did the tenured leader do to prepare for the transition?*

- ▶ *What could he or she have done better?*
- ▶ *What did the new leader do to initiate a clear, new beginning?*
- ▶ *What could he or she have done better?*
- ▶ *How did the followers in the situation respond to the tenured leader? To the new leader?*
- ▶ *What were the results of the leadership transition? Smooth? Rocky?*
- ▶ *Was the organization or group able to move ahead? Was it set back?*

Following this discussion, read aloud this statement from Gordon MacKenzie: “If you are in a position of power and want to lead well, remember: Allow those you lead ... to lead ... when they feel the need. All will benefit.”

Stress that wise leaders know both when to accept the mantle of leadership and when to pass it along to someone else. They take deliberate steps to ensure a smooth transition and success for their successor.

Explore the Bible

- Recall for the class Elijah’s experiences at Horeb and following, as God made clear to him that it was time for him to anoint a successor in his prophetic ministry. Note that 1 Kings 2 opens with the account of Elisha, his successor, preparing to say good-bye to him.

Ask someone to read aloud verses 1-8; then ask:

- ▶ *What can you conclude about the relationship between Elijah and Elisha?*
- ▶ *Why do you think Elisha was reluctant for Elijah to leave him behind? Why did he insist on continuing to go along with him?*
- ▶ *What was the response of the other prophets in the company? Why do you think Elisha's response was so different?*

Note what Elijah did with his mantle in verse 8 and recall what he did with his mantle when he tapped Elisha as his successor. Suggest that Elijah's mantle was for him a symbol just as Moses' rod and staff were for him.

- Read aloud 1 Kings 2:9-12 and note that before he left, Elijah asked Elisha if there was anything he could do for him. Then ask:
 - ▶ *What did Elisha request of Elijah?*
 - ▶ *How did Elisha know whether he would be granted his request?*

Note that "the double portion" is the portion of the inheritance reserved for the eldest son. In making this request, Elisha was asking to be treated as Elijah's sole heir. His request showed respect and appreciation for his mentor and reveals humility.

- Call attention to 1 Kings 2:13-18. Note again the function of the mantle. Elisha symbolized the transition between Elijah and himself by picking up

Elijah's mantle. When he struck the water with it, the water parted and he was able to cross to where the other prophets were. Note verse 15 and point out that even from a distance, the other prophets could tell that Elijah's power and role had been transferred to him, and they recognized him immediately as Elijah's successor.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud 2 Kings 2:16-17; then ask:

- ▶ *Given their response to Elisha when they saw him coming toward them, why do you think the other prophets insisted on going to search for Elijah?*
- ▶ *Why do you think Elisha relented and agreed to let the prophets go and search for Elijah?*

- Using information from the Students Guide, review the suggestions for making smooth transitions from Bill Bridges' book. Note especially what he suggests in the three separate processes of The Ending/Saying Good-bye, Shifting into Neutral and The Beginning/Moving Forward.

Suggest that Elijah and Elisha navigated a smooth leadership transition because they said a proper good-bye, spent adequate time in the neutral zone and marked a specific ending and new beginning.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Lead class members to apply the examples of Elijah and Elisha in their arenas of influence by introducing some of the ideas from Jeff Woods in his article "Executive Coaching" (www.ethicsdaily.com).

Note that “coaching is future-oriented rather than focused upon the past. Coaching differs from training in that coachees learn from their own mistakes rather than mistakes made by previous learners. ... Unlike mentoring, coaching does not result in a symbiotic relationship. Coaching focuses all of its efforts on bringing out the best in the coachee. ... Coaching works, because all of its energy is geared toward the individual seeking to develop” (“Executive Coaching,” www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=3168).

- Ask class members to give examples of times they were in a role similar either to a coach or a coachee. Then ask:
 - ▶ *What did you or your coach do that was most helpful?*
 - ▶ *What could you or your coach have done more effectively?*
 - ▶ *What opportunities do you currently have to serve as a coach for someone who has leadership potential? How do you plan to encourage that person to develop to their full potential?*
- Close with prayer, asking God to help you know both when to accept new leadership responsibilities and when to turn responsibilities over to someone else.

Making Risky Decisions Leaders Guide

2 Kings 5:1-19

¹Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. ²Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel." He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." ⁷When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me." ⁸But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." ¹¹But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! ¹²Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man

of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean. ¹⁵Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant."¹⁶But he said, "As the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!"¹⁷Then Naaman said, "If not, please let two muleloads of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the LORD. ¹⁸But may the LORD pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant on this one count."¹⁹He said to him, "Go in peace."

Theme: Wise leaders act boldly in the face of risk.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Ask class members who have seen the 1993 Steven Spielberg movie, "Schindler's List," to recall its storyline, particularly details related to the title character, Oskar Schindler. Supplement their comments with the following information as necessary:

"Schindler's List" tells the story of Oskar Schindler, an aspiring German industrialist. Born into a Catholic family in Austria-Hungary, he was raised with money and privilege. At an early age, Schindler

developed a reputation for womanizing and hard drinking. Even after he married Emilie Pelzl in 1928, he purportedly almost always had a mistress or two.

After joining the Nazi party, he and Emilie eventually moved to Krakow, Poland, which by 1941 had become occupied by the Nazis. Schindler took over the apartment of a Jewish family and also gained control of a Jewish-owned factory in a get-rich-quick scheme.

Factory employees were classified as "essential workers" and were therefore exempt from "resettlement" in concentration camps. Itzhak Stern, an accountant at the factory, conceived of a way to save Jewish lives by employing musicians, academicians, rabbis and others at the factory. Aware of what Stern was doing, Schindler looked the other way and permitted it to happen.

As the Nazis began to exterminate Jews, Schindler promised to protect his factory workers. Even after a Nazi commandant, Amon Goeth, brutally liquidated the ghetto to which the Jews had been confined and sent the surviving Jews into forced labor, Schindler bribed Goeth to allow him to re-establish the factory within the walls of the labor camp. The factory work continued there much as it had.

Though he never really gave a clear explanation for why he protected and saved the lives of so many Jews, Schindler reportedly said, "I knew the people who worked for me. When you know people, you have to behave towards them like human beings" (www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/schindlerslist.php).

One of the Jews whose life Schindler saved said, “The movie didn’t show all the little things he did; he came around and greeted you. I had food, protection, and hope.”

Another said, “I don’t know why he was so good to us, but I would say, ‘Thank you very much,’ because he saved my life.”

- Note that following the war, Oskar Schindler lost his German citizenship. He went to Argentina with his wife, his mistress and a group of the Jewish factory workers, where they bought a farm. In 1958, he left that group behind—including his wife and mistress—and returned to Germany. He spent the rest of his life traveling between Germany and Israel and living on handouts from many of the Jews whose lives he had helped save, because his numerous business ventures failed. He died in 1974.

Then ask:

- ▶ *Was Oskar Schindler a wise leader? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *What risks did he take?*
- ▶ *What did his choices cost him personally?*

Stress that Oskar Schindler hardly lived the life of a saint and was not immune from personal problems, yet he did act boldly and take significant risks to save the lives of hundreds of Jews. He had no way of knowing what results his actions would have.

Suggest that leaders often face choices filled with risk where decisions are not clear-cut. Such was the

case in the story of Naaman, a powerful man with a terrible problem.

Explore the Bible

- Read aloud 2 Kings 5:1-4. Using the text and information in the Students Guide, provide a profile of Naaman. Note that he was “a great man ... a mighty warrior,” and that God had used him to bring victory to Aram. That placed him in high standing with Aram’s king.

Point out that Naaman’s military victories had come at the expense of the Israelites, yet it was Yahweh, Israel’s God, who had blessed him with these victories. Then ask:

- ▶ *What was Naaman’s problem?*
- ▶ *Do you find it unusual that a slave girl dared to speak up like she did?*
- ▶ *What did the slave girl advise?*
- ▶ *Who was the real leader here?*
- ▶ *Does a person have to be an acknowledged leader in order to lead?*
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 2 Kings 5:5-7; then ask:
 - ▶ *Does it seem unusual to you that the king would listen to and act on what a slave girl said?*
 - ▶ *What was the Israelite king’s reaction to the letter from Aram’s king? Why did he react this way?*

► *What important point in the slave girl's advice did the Aramean king overlook?*

► *Why did the Israelite king appear equally foolish?*

- Call attention to the sequence of events in 2 Kings 5:8-14:

Elisha intervened with the king (v 8);

Naaman went to Elisha's house (v 9);

Elisha did not receive Naaman personally, instead sending a messenger to tell him what to do (v 10);

Naaman responded in anger, yet acknowledged that Elisha's God could cure his leprosy (v 11-12);

Naaman's servants intervened and convinced him to do what Elisha said to do (v 13);

Naaman did as Elisha ordered and was healed (v 14).

Lead the class to respond to what happened by asking such questions as:

► *What was Elisha's motive in intervening with the king?*

► *Why did Elisha send a messenger out to Naaman, rather than going out to meet him himself?*

► *Why do you think Elisha prescribed such an unusual method for the cure?*

► *Do you think Elisha intended to make Naaman angry? Why or why not?*

► *Who were the real leaders here? Elisha? Naaman? Naaman's servants? All of them? Why?*

► *Who took the greatest risks?*

Read aloud 2 Kings 5:15-19 and note the results of this incident for Naaman and for Elisha. Note that while the episode closed positively—Naaman was cured; Elisha proved that God was powerful and in control; Naaman acknowledged Israel's God as the one true God; Elisha rejected "payment" that would have obligated him to those in power—things were not wrapped up neatly.

Naaman wanted to worship Israel's God alone, but he had to be "patriotic" and follow the Aramean king into pagan temples to worship the god Rimmon. Elisha evidently gave him the nod to do so. We also do not know whether Naaman would continue the border raids on Israel, whether the Israelite girl who suggested the source for Naaman's cure remained a slave and whether Naaman kept true to his promise to worship God alone.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Remind the class that good leaders take risks. Naaman listened to his wife's slave girl and to his servants. The slave girl and the servants boldly spoke up, disregarding their lowly station. Elisha risked making Naaman angry in order to prove God's power. Each of them refused to allow the positions in which society, culture and circumstance had placed them to prevent them from taking some

risks and exercising leadership. None of them knew the outcome of their decisions, yet each acted decisively.

- Relate the following incident:

Barely six weeks into the job as President of the United States following John F. Kennedy Jr.'s assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson called Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP. He urged Wilkins to begin taking deliberate and purposeful action on the civil rights issue. He also gave Wilkins advice about how to talk with Everett Dirksen, the senate minority leader.

Johnson knew that he was supposed to be the president for all of the people. He could not do for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 what people like Wilkins and Martin Luther King Jr. could do. But he could follow through once they generated a sense of urgency and political will among the people.

What he did was risky and took courage. By calling attention to this issue, he created discomfort for a lot of people. But he believed the time was right and the cause was just (www.fastcompany.com/magazine/25/heifetz.html).

- Close with prayer, asking God to enable you to listen to advice from people regardless of their social or cultural position. Pray that God will give you the wisdom to act boldly and take the risks necessary to help fulfill the divine plan.

Running After Wealth Leaders Guide

2 Kings 5:19b-27

¹⁹But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance,
²⁰Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, "My master has let that Aramean Naaman off too lightly by not accepting from him what he offered. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something out of him." ²¹So Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he jumped down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is everything all right?" ²²He replied, "Yes, but my master has sent me to say 'Two members of a company of prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" ²³Naaman said, "Please accept two talents." He urged him, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them in front of Gehazi. ²⁴When he came to the citadel, he took the bags from them, and stored them inside; he dismissed the men, and they left. ²⁵He went in and stood before his master; and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" He answered, "Your servant has not gone anywhere at all." ²⁶But he said to him, "Did I not go with you in spirit when someone left his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to accept money and to accept clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves?" ²⁷Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants forever." So he left his presence leprous, as white as snow.

Theme: Wise leaders turn from the temptation of greed.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.

- Obtain from newspapers, news magazines and news Web sites examples of greed from various sectors of society. Use these in place of or in addition to the suggestions for introducing or concluding the lesson.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Lead the class to think about the temptation to greed that many leaders face. Ask them to recall facts surrounding the well-publicized rise and fall of former televangelist Jim Bakker. Supplement the discussion with the following information as necessary:

In the mid-1980s, Jim Bakker was adored by millions as head of a multi-million dollar religious empire consisting of Heritage USA, PTL and the Inspirational Network. In order to build Heritage USA, a combination Christian retreat center and amusement park, he and then-wife Tammy Faye had to raise a half million dollars every day. They achieved this through soliciting donations on their widely popular television shows where Bakker preached a prosperity gospel of optimism, health and wealth.

Viewers responded more than generously, even after the park was built. At its peak, Heritage USA drew 6 million visitors annually, and the Bakkers enjoyed a lavish lifestyle filled with all the amenities money could buy. Their fund-raising often took priority over their child-raising, and they tried to compensate by lavishing their children with gifts.

“They got everything they wanted because we felt so guilty about having to work so much—all they had to do is name a gift,” Tammy Faye said (“Scandal and Redemption,” www.abcnews.com).

Bakker’s empire came crashing down in 1987 after reports surfaced about his affair with a church secretary. Legal troubles closely followed. He was convicted in 1989 of mail and wire fraud related to fundraising efforts at PTL and was sentenced to 45 years in federal prison. While in prison, he and Tammy Faye divorced. He was released after serving five years, during which time he says he made considerable changes in his life and his way of thinking.

In a 1997 interview, he recalled that he used to teach people not to pray “Thy will be done when they want a new car,” but instead just to “claim it. I preached that God wanted everybody to be rich and prosperous, with no pain and no problems—a Pollyanna gospel. . . . I had taught people to fall in love with money. The deceitfulness of riches and the lust for other things had choked out the Word of God in my life and in the lives of my family members and co-workers” (“Jim Bakker Interview,” www.pbi.ab.ca/servant/archive/1997win/BAKKER_INTERVIEW.HTM).

He admits that prior to his downfall, he “preached selectively” and “skipped over things.” He says he tried to rationalize away ideas like the love of money being the root of evil. “What I did was proof texting. . . . I took success books and put scriptures to them.”

- Point out that Bakker is certainly not the first public figure or person in leadership to fall to the tempta-

tion of greed. News accounts regularly reveal details about CEOs, coaches, educators, politicians—people in every sector of society—who have allowed greed to motivate their decisions and cloud their judgment. Many now face the consequences of their actions, including courtroom trials, bankruptcy, jail time, breakup of family and loss of respect and influence.

High-profile and high-powered leaders often run in affluent circles, surrounded by wealthy people and lavish material possessions. Some believe that their positions entitle them to additional wealth and things. And some followers are loyal to leaders primarily because of what the relationship can do for them personally.

- Make two columns on a board or chart. Label one, Money; label the other, Greed. Ask class members to suggest outcomes or results of each. List their ideas in the appropriate column. Include suggestions such as these:

Money

Convenience
 Power
 Influence

 Comfort
 Freedom from worry
 Pursuit of personal interests
 Philanthropy

 Opportunity

Greed

Poor stewardship
 Inequity
 Unfair distribution of resources
 Resentment
 Jealousy
 Dishonesty
 Unfulfilled need to amass more
 Misplace priorities

Lead class members to consider where the fine line exists between having enough money and becoming greedy. Ask them such questions as:

- ▶ *When are the conveniences, power and influence of money a good thing for leaders? When do they become destructive?*
- ▶ *What causes leaders to become greedy?*

Explore the Bible

- Introduce the main characters in this biblical text: Naaman, Elisha and Gehazi. Ask class members to recall the sequence of events that brought Naaman and Elisha together (2 Kings 5:1-19).

Identify Gehazi as Elisha’s servant, but note that this designation was not the same as “slave.” Gehazi, because of his association with Elisha, enjoyed a certain degree of privilege and influence. He retained personal dignity and some autonomy and was not considered Elisha’s “property.” Instead, he assisted the prophet Elisha in his ministry.

Read aloud 2 Kings 5:19b-20 and note that this incident takes place immediately following Naaman’s cure from leprosy. Naaman had evidently begun his return home, and Elisha was apparently nowhere around. Note that Gehazi accused “Elisha the man of God” with letting “that Aramean off too lightly.” Gehazi thought, for whatever reason, that Elisha should have accepted the gifts Naaman offered him in return for curing his leprosy.

Ask:

► *Why was it so important that Elisha refuse payment from Naaman?*

Remind the class of the prophetic tradition in which Elisha stood. He, Elijah and others of God's prophets stood in stark contrast to many false prophets of that day who told people only what they wanted to hear and were handsomely rewarded as a result. Elisha was determined to serve God purely out of obedience to God's direction and expected no compensation for what he did.

- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 2 Kings 5:21-24. Then ask class members to list in order the rapid sequence of events: Gehazi went after Naaman, lied to him, received from Naaman twice as much as he originally asked and hid what Naaman had given him.

Remind the class that Naaman felt indebted to Elisha and would have jumped at the chance to help him. Gehazi knew this and took advantage of that fact for his own personal benefit. Then ask:

► *What did Gehazi's actions reveal about him?*

► *How did Gehazi's actions affect Elisha and his ministry?*

► *What did Gehazi's actions say to Naaman about God and God's grace?*

► *What did Gehazi's actions say to Naaman about how Elisha's needs were met?*

Point out how Gehazi's greed had a wide-ranging effect. What he chose to do reflected not just his

personal values and attitudes but also reflected on Elisha and affected Elisha's ministry and influence. They also affected Naaman's understandings of God and God's ways, no doubt causing confusion for one who had only moments before acknowledged Israel's God and committed to worship God. Gehazi knew how wrong his actions were as evidenced by his attempts to hide the silver and clothes.

- Bring Gehazi's story to a conclusion by reading aloud 2 Kings 5:25-27. Then ask:

► *How do you think Elisha knew what Gehazi had done?*

► *What were the consequences for Gehazi?*

► *What significance do you attach to the fact that Gehazi's deeds resulted in his being afflicted with leprosy?*

Point out that Gehazi, like others caught in the cycle of greed, sought under false pretenses things which were not rightfully his. One sin led to another, and his greed destroyed his reputation and his relationship with Elisha. It also harmed Elisha's ministry. Ultimately, his greed cost him his health.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Challenge class members to identify the character and movie which introduced this mantra: "Greed is good. Greed is right. Greed works."

Lead them to recall the 1987 movie "Wall Street," which starred Michael Douglas as a ruthless stock-

broker named Gordon Gekko. For Gekko, greed was good, right and worked. He also said, "I make nothing, I own."

Gekko amassed his fortunes as a Wall Street stock-broker using illegal insider information. Charlie Sheen plays a younger broker who goes to work for Gekko, eventually running his portfolio in a way that incriminates him but keeps Gekko out of trouble. Sheen's character, Bud Fox, soon finds his world spiraling out of control as he breaks laws, pushes away his family and even betrays his father's job. Fox is ultimately arrested on insider trading charges, but he gets his revenge in the end.

As one movie reviewer noted, "Wall Street shows just what can happen when greed enters the picture. Good men can go bad when money is all that matters" (www.movieprop.com/tvandmovie/reviews/wallstreet.htm).

Another reviewer noted that though the movie showed the extent of the culture of greed in the 1980s, not much has changed since then. In fact, what was considered outrageous and dishonorable then is now accepted as a fact of life on Wall Street.

- Ask your class to respond to such questions as:
 - ▶ *Is money always "the name of the game" in terms of leadership? Is this more true in some arenas than others?*
 - ▶ *What difference should faith in Christ make for a Christian leader and how he or she views and uses money?*

▶ *What is the purpose of money and wealth?*

▶ *How can leaders recognize the difference in themselves and in those they lead between healthy initiative and dangerous greed?*

- Close with prayer, asking God to give you wisdom to use monetary resources wisely and turn from the temptation of greed.

Pursuing Rightness Consistently Leaders Guide

2 Kings 22

¹Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ²He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the LORD, saying, ⁴"Go up to the high priest Hilkiah, and have him count the entire sum of the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people; ⁵let it be given into the hand of the workers who have the oversight of the house of the LORD; let them give it to the workers who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house, ⁶that is, to the carpenters, to the builders, to the masons; and let them use it to buy timber and quarried stone to repair the house. ⁷But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly." ⁸The high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." When Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, he read it. ... ¹¹When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. ... ¹⁹because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the LORD.

2 Kings 23

¹Then the king directed that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem should be gathered to him. ²The king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. ³The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart

and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant. ...
²²No such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, even during all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah. ... Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

Theme: Wise Christian leaders consistently do what is right and understand that their faithfulness may call for sacrifice.

Before You Teach

- Read the focal passage, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.
- Note that this lesson covers two chapters from 2 Kings. Carefully select those verses to which you will call attention during class.
- Thoroughly read the example suggested for the lesson's introduction and become familiar with it so that you can tell it in your own words. While it is somewhat long, it offers a refreshing and timely illustration in a culture where CEOs are often known more for what they can get by with than for what they do that is morally and ethically upright.

As You Teach

Introduce the Lesson

- Begin by relating the following example:

Baxter International is a multi-billion dollar company that employs 48,000 people. It sells IV bags, biopharmaceuticals and drug-delivery systems for treatment of millions of patients each year, people suffering from life-threatening illnesses like hemophilia, infectious diseases and cancer. At its helm as chief financial officer is Harry Kraemer, a graduate of Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management. A devout Catholic, people admire and respect Kraemer as much for his values and family commitments as for his business acumen.

Under Kraemer's leadership, Baxter International overcame some difficult situations shortly after he arrived in 1993. In response to them, he successfully led company employees to adopt and live up to a set of "shared values": respect, responsiveness and results.

The company had another opportunity to prove its commitment to these values in 2001. Several patients undergoing dialysis had become suddenly ill and died. The common factor in all of the cases was the dialysis filters, which had been manufactured by a company Baxter had acquired the previous year.

All sorts of things can go wrong in manufacturing devices like those Baxter sells. Most all of them are used in life-and-death situations, so when a patient dies, it is sometimes difficult to determine if the death occurred as a result of the existing illness or due to another factor.

Kraemer's response in this situation was, "Let's make sure we do the right thing."

Baxter spared no time and no expense investigating the suspicious filters. It assembled people worldwide with expertise in quality, manufacturing, toxicology, marketing, communications, clinical affairs and other areas. Exhaustive research turned up nothing. Then a quality engineer in Sweden noticed something unusual that might have been a contributing factor.

Baxter's Harry Kraemer owned up to the situation which led to this crisis, told the truth and took responsibility when he could've easily passed the buck and assigned blame elsewhere. His company was hit with losses estimated at \$189 million.

"I'm not a very smart guy," Kraemer said, "so let's keep it simple. Think of any problem you need to deal with. There are a million pieces of information that can get involved in a decision. But let's get above the tree line and ask some simple questions. What is the issue? What are the alternatives? What are the pros and cons? What is the best solution? Life is complex, but you can boil the morass down to thinking simply" ("Harry Kraemer's Moment of Truth," www.fastcompany.com/magazine/64/kraemer.html).

That's not all. Kraemer asked Baxter's board of directors to cut his performance bonus by at least 40% for that year, and he suggested that his top executives take a 20% cut.

"We violated the physicians' trust. It wasn't intentional, but our product failed. We have to rebuild that trust," he said.

Though the company's stock took a hit in the wake of the crisis, it soon recovered. In the year following,

Kraemer reflected on all that had happened and said: “Of course we’ll do the right thing. As opposed to what?”

- Suggest that it is just that attitude—doing the right thing and only the right thing, regardless of the outcome—that causes wise leaders to distinguish themselves from the rest. Many leaders, whether in business, government, education, sports, entertainment or other arenas, justify cutting deals and ignoring ethical standards because “everybody else is doing it.” Their actions are morally tolerable to most people because they are widely accepted and practiced. Yet there is another model: consistently pursuing rightness.

Donald P. Jacobs, dean emeritus at the Kellogg School, said of Harry Kraemer: “There are relatively few people in the world like Harry. (He) lives his life the way most of us would like to live our lives. What Harry says he believes in you can put it in the bank. The way he treats his coworkers is the way he’d like people to treat him. “

Explore the Bible

- Connect Harry Kraemer’s story to Josiah’s by pointing out that the two faced similar issues, including rebuilding trust and guiding people to share the same vision and values.

Note that all leaders face these challenges. In addition, Josiah faced the daunting task of recovering his people’s lost heritage and rediscovering the value of God’s redemptive acts in their history and on their behalf. He had to somehow inspire and instill hope after years of corruption and cynicism.

He had to overcome the people’s resistance to change, get people to come together and agree to live according to the covenant. He had to make sure his example was consistent and upright.

Point out that Josiah inherited the results of the choices and sins of the leaders before him. Their disobedience had long-term consequences that extended for generations. Josiah was instrumental in bringing about much-needed reforms, but he did so at great risk. And as righteous as he was, he could not stem the tide of destruction those sins set into motion.

Josiah was a righteous king. Scripture says of him, “Before him there was no king like him ... nor did any like him arise after him (2 Kings 23:25). In spite of the word of doom Judah had received, he stuck to his system of reforms and consistently did the right thing in God’s sight. Because he did, history has looked upon him as a godly example.

- Call attention to selected verses from 2 Kings 22:1-7. Note that Josiah was very young when he ascended to Judah’s throne (v 1). Point out that he “did what was right in the sight of the LORD” and “did not turn aside to the right or to the left” (v 2).

One of the most important things Josiah did was instruct that the temple be restored (vv 3-7). After years of neglect and abuse, which included idolatry, its condition was shameful and completely unacceptable for the worship of Yahweh.

- Read aloud selected verses from 2 Kings 22:8-13 and lead the class to discuss what happened by asking such questions as:

► *What did Hilkiah discover during the temple renovation?*

► *How did he know of its significance?*

► *What was his response?*

► *What was Josiah's response to Hilkiah's discovery, and what did it symbolize?*

- Note 2 Kings 22:14-20 and call attention to Hulduh's prophecy and what it meant. Point out that when Josiah became aware of the discovery of the scroll of the law, he ordered that the message of God concerning it be delivered through a prophet. That was Hulduh's role. While she predicted Judah's downfall following Josiah's death, she also predicted for him a peaceful death and indicated that he would not live to see Judah fall.
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud 2 Kings 23:1-3. Note that Josiah and the people publicly subscribed to the covenant's stipulations, which led to further reforms.

Point out selected verses in 2 Kings 23 which indicate Josiah's leadership in dismantling objects of idolatry and pagan worship sites.

Note the significance of 2 Kings 23:21-13 and Josiah's leadership in renewing Passover, which had not been observed for years.

Also note that contrary to Hulduh's prophecy, Josiah died in battle, though Judah was still intact as a nation at that time.

Suggest that Josiah's example reminds us that effective, moral leadership rarely occurs in a vacuum. Josiah was able to lead the necessary reforms once the lost scroll was found and the people rediscovered their history and renewed their covenant with God. A wise leader, he was unafraid to acknowledge the long-term cycle of disobedience and sin and take drastic measures to end those practices. Still, his faithfulness could not bring deliverance to the nation. God judged the nation according to divine standards.

Apply Biblical Truth

- Relate to the class the following observations from EthicsDaily.com columnist Jeff Woods:

He noted that following September 11, 2001, "many Americans shifted their heroes from athletes to firefighters, from musical artists to relief workers. Part of the shift was in response to the tremendous courage displayed by such workers in the midst of a crisis" ("Courageous Church Leaders Walk a Tightrope," www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2169).

One kind of courage, he said, does involve thinking clearly, making rational decisions and responding hopefully during a crisis. But he also identified another kind of courage, one that "stems from making a statement or performing an act in the midst of an *ongoing* struggle rather than in the midst of a newly formed crisis. This form of courage can be a bit more complicated."

Courage, Woods believes, "involves doing the minority thing. It means taking the minority stance. It

involves saying what few will say, doing what no one else will do, defending those no one else will defend and helping those others have passed by. While many people may have thought about responding before, the one who does it *first* is the one laden with courage and thus labeled courageous.”

- Recall the example of Harry Kraemer and ask the class if they believe this description of courage fits him. Then suggest that it certainly fits Josiah, and it should be applicable to all leaders.
- Close with prayer, asking God to help you, as you both lead and follow, to consistently do what is right, even when others hold to unethical standards and systems seem inherently corrupt. Ask God to give you the courage to do the minority thing when it is the right thing.

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