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Leading God's People God's Way

Lesson 16: The Law of Acceptance

Introduction

This is Lesson 16 in our course called *Leading God's People God's Way*. We are in the process of learning how to grow in our leadership ability as we study the laws of leadership. In this lesson we will learn about the **Law of Acceptance**.

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People are always asking the question: "Why should I follow you?" Every leader must understand that before people will accept his vision or cause, they must first accept him. Once people are confident in the leader, then they will be confident in the vision as well. Many leaders think that if the vision is great enough people will automatically accept it and follow it. But that is not how it works. People don't just automatically follow a worthy cause. They follow a worthy leader who promotes a worthy cause. That is the Law of Acceptance – people accept the leader first, and then the vision.

Gideon was a very unlikely leader. He certainly did not see himself as a leader. When the angel spoke to Gideon he responded by saying, "Lord, how can I save Israel? My family is the weakest in the tribe, and I am the least in my father's house." But, despite Gideon's doubts, God used him. The people rallied around him. Warriors began to follow him even before they knew the plan of attack. When he blew the trumpet to call them to war, they came from everywhere to join him in an extremely risky endeavor. God called the leader first – one whom the people would follow – then he clarified the vision. Clearly, the people accepted Gideon even before they understood exactly what they would be up against. In the end, Gideon attracted so many warriors that God had to turn some of them away.

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The Law of Acceptance says this: **People accept the leader, then the vision.** The key verse for this law is Joshua 1:16-17, which says: "¹⁶Then they answered Joshua, 'Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses.'"

Our key verse for this lesson is found in the first chapter of the book of Joshua. This is the time when Joshua was preparing to bring the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. Moses had died. Now his younger protégé Joshua had the task of leading the people into the inheritance that the Lord had prepared for them.

Joshua cast the vision to the people and they responded immediately saying that they

would do whatever Joshua commanded them to do. They said they would go wherever Joshua sent them. They were prepared to fully obey Joshua as they had Moses.

At first glance, it may appear that the people are accepting the vision of going into the Promised Land before they accepted Joshua. That would be the opposite of the Law of Acceptance. But we have to go further back in the story to see that the people actually did accept Joshua before they accepted his vision. You see, there was another time before this, when they rejected Joshua's vision because they did not accept him as a leader.

Do you remember the first time that the Children of Israel came to the border of the Promised Land? Moses had sent twelve spies into the land to see what it was like. Joshua was one of those twelve spies.

When the twelve spies returned from spying out the land, the people were waiting with excited expectation. The spies reported that the land was indeed a good land, flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord had said. But then they told the people that there were giants in the land and that they lived in fortified cities. They said that they were like grasshoppers in the eyes of the people of the land, and they feared that they were not able to enter the land and take it as the Lord had promised.

There were two spies who brought a different report. Their names were Joshua and Caleb. They disagreed with the other ten spies. They were confident that, with the Lord's help, the Children of Israel would be able to enter the land and conquer it as the Lord had promised. Joshua and Caleb were men of faith. They believed that what God said would surely come to pass.

Unfortunately, the Children of Israel did not accept the leadership of Joshua and Caleb. Both of them were leaders in their individual tribes. We know that because one of the criteria for the spies that Moses chose was that they were leaders of their tribes. But neither Joshua nor Caleb had any leadership influence at a national level. As a result the people did not follow them.

Joshua and Caleb confirmed the vision that Moses had set before the people. They confirmed that the Lord had given them the land, even though they acknowledged that it would not be easy. They too had seen the giants in the land. But they believed God and were confident that he would be with them and help them to conquer the land. The vision that they had was the right vision because it was God's vision.

But, the Children of Israel did not accept the vision. Why? It is because they did not accept the leaders, Joshua and Caleb, who were presenting the vision. You see, that is how the Law of Acceptance works. The people must accept the leader first. Then they will accept the leader's vision. But if they do not accept the leader, they will not accept the vision.

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In our key verse it is now forty years later. Forty years have passed since the first time Joshua, with the help of his friend Caleb, tried to lead the Children of Israel into the

Promised Land. The unbelieving generation, those who would not follow Joshua and Caleb, have now died out. The only two remaining are Joshua and Caleb, the two who believed God. Again the Children of Israel are standing at the border to the Promised Land, but now they are ready to follow Joshua into the land. What had changed?

Here is what I think changed: the people now accepted Joshua as their leader. And, as a result, they were willing to accept his vision also.

You see, the people in the Promised Land had not changed. There were still giants in the land and they still lived in fortified cities. We know that by reading ahead in the story. Do you remember the story of when Joshua conquered Jericho? That whole story is about how God miraculously destroyed the walls of Jericho. In other words, Jericho was still a fortified city, just as it had been the first time they came to the border.

The vision also had not changed. Both times the vision was to enter the Promised Land and receive the inheritance that the Lord had promised them. Both times it was Joshua who shared the vision with the people. If you read both stories in the Bible you will see that he used almost the exact same words when he talked to the people. So, I ask you again, what had changed? Why did the people not enter the land the first time, but now they are ready to go in?

The change was in the attitude of Children of Israel towards Joshua. The first time they did not accept Joshua as their leader. Now they are ready to do whatever he commanded and to go wherever he sent them. Wow! That is quite a change, do you not think?

During the forty years that the Children of Israel wandered in the desert because of their disobedience, Joshua was growing as a leader. Moses, the leader of the nation, personally mentored him. Everywhere Moses went, Joshua went. Moses developed and trained Joshua to be the next leader of Israel. And, as a result, the people accepted him when it came his turn to lead them.

The first time the Children of Israel came to the border of the Promised Land, Joshua shared the vision that they were able to enter the land, conquer it and possess it, just as the Lord had promised. But, the people did not accept his vision, because they did not accept him as their leader.

The second time they stood on the border of the Promised Land, Joshua shared the same vision with them. And this time they were ready to enter the land. The reason was, now they accepted Joshua as their leader. And, as a result, they also accepted his vision. That is the Law of Acceptance.

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Why don't you take a moment to pause the DVD and memorize the Law of Acceptance and the key verse now?

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[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]

- a) *The Law of Acceptance says that people accept the leader first and then the vision. While vision is important, who you are as a leader is more important. Do you spend more time working on your vision, or on your character?*
- b) *Joshua's life illustrates the Law of Acceptance. His vision never changed, but he did grow as a leader. What are you doing to grow as a leader so that people will accept you, and your vision?*

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As we study the Law of Acceptance in this lesson, we are going to look at the life of Gideon. Let us take a quick look at the setting for our story. If you look at the slide on the screen right now, you will see where our story fits into history.

We just reviewed how Joshua was the one who eventually lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land after forty years of wandering in the desert because of doubt and unbelief. It was in about 1405 B.C. that they finally crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. In the book of Joshua you can read the many exciting stories of how they conquered the land that God had given them.

After Israel had conquered the land, Joshua died and went to be with his fathers, and Israel entered a time in her history known as the period of the judges. This was a time in which there was no centralized government. The people lived throughout the land in the various areas that the Lord had allocated to them.

There was one problem though. The Lord had commanded them to drive out the nations that were living in the land, but they had not completely done that. So, over a period of time, they were influenced by these people who followed false gods. This started a cycle that repeated itself over and over again throughout the period of the judges. Israel would be seduced by the nations around them and begin worshipping false gods. The Lord would become angry and send judgment against them. Then the people would repent and turn back to God and he would send a leader, a judge, to deliver them from their oppression.

The first three judges that led Israel were Othniel who judged Israel for forty years, Ehud who defeated the Moabites to bring Israel eighty years of peace, and Shamgar who saved Israel by striking down six hundred Philistines.

After Ehud died, the Israelites again did evil in the sight of the Lord so he gave them over to the Canaanites who ruled over them for twenty years. Then Israel cried out to God for deliverance and he sent Deborah to deliver them. Deborah became a judge over Israel in about 1233 B.C. She was a prophetess and the fourth judge over Israel. She led Israel for forty years and delivered them from the Canaanites. If you remember, we studied the life of Deborah when we learned about the Law of Respect.

After Deborah died, Israel again did evil in the eyes of the Lord and, for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Eventually they cried out to God again and he sent them a man named Gideon who delivered them from the Midianites. Gideon

defeated the Midianites with three hundred men in about 1186 B.C. He judged Israel for forty years and died in about 1146 B.C.

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Before we go any further in our lesson, it would be good for you to read the scriptures pertaining to this story. Why don't you stop right now to take a moment and read the following scriptures?

Scriptures to read: Judges 6:1-40; Judges 7:1-25

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Our story for this lesson is set in the period of the judges. Israel was in a time when they were doing evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves, and strongholds.

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Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.

When the Israelites cried to the Lord because of Midian, he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. I said to you, 'I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me." God was reminding Israel that they were in this mess because they had not obeyed him and had turned to the worship of false gods. He had mercy on them, however, and heard their cry.

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The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."

Let me take a moment to make sure you understand what just happened. Did you notice where Gideon was? He was in a winepress. And what was he doing? He was threshing wheat in the winepress. Now let me ask you a question. What is a winepress normally used for? Is it used for threshing wheat? No, it is used for pressing grapes. Wheat is usually threshed on a threshing floor.

Do you see the picture? Gideon is threshing wheat in a winepress instead of on a threshing floor. Why? What made Gideon use a winepress for something other than

wine? Perhaps he was afraid, or perhaps he was being wise as he defied the Midianites for occupying his land and oppressing his people. Either way, he was hiding from the Midianites. You see, a winepress is usually quite deep, so Gideon could climb inside and thresh his wheat without being seen.

Now notice what the angel says when he greets Gideon. He calls Gideon a "mighty warrior." Is that not just like the Lord? He often calls things that are not as though they were. Gideon was not a mighty warrior; at least not yet. He was hiding, and yet the angel called him a mighty warrior. The Lord looks at our hearts and sees our potential. Then he calls that into being. He does not talk about what he sees, but what he wants to see. There is a lesson in that for us.

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Gideon replied to the angel, "But sir, if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian."

The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

"But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down the Midianites as if they were one man."

Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you."

And the Lord said, "I will wait until you return."

So Gideon went home, prepared a young goat, and made a loaf of bread without yeast. Then he put the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, and he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And Gideon did so. With the tip of the staff that was in his hand, the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared. When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!"

But the Lord said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die."

So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it "The Lord is Peace."

Let me point out something to you here. Did you notice that the Bible refers to the person who is talking to Gideon as both the "angel of the Lord" and also "the Lord." And then did you notice Gideon's exclamation when he realized that he had been

speaking to the angel of the Lord. This person who is called the angel of the Lord appears a number of times in the Old Testament.

Many scholars believe that this is actually the Lord Jesus appearing before he came to earth as a man. One of the things that the angel of the Lord does is he receives worship. That is something that only God can do. A normal angel sent by God would never do that. In fact, there are times recorded in the Bible when people tried to bow down and worship normal angels. Every time this happened the angel stopped them from doing so. But when it was the angel of the Lord, he never stopped the worship. That is interesting, is it not?

Gideon believed that he had seen God. That is why he exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!" You see, Gideon had heard what God told Moses when Moses asked to see God's glory. God said to Moses, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Gideon feared that he was going to die because he realized that he had seen God face-to-face. But the Lord reassured him that he would not die.

That same night the Lord said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one that is seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Use the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, and offer the bull as a burnt offering."

So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime. In the morning when the men of the town got up, there was Baal's altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar!

The people asked each other, "Who did this?" When they carefully investigated, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did it."

The men of the town demanded of Joash, "Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it."

But Joash was a wise man. He replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar." So that day they called Gideon "Jerub-Baal" which means, "let Baal contend," because he broke down Baal's altar.

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Now all the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning his people to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet him.

Gideon wanted to know for sure that God was with him. Apparently his faith was a little weak, so he said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised--look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground around it is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said." And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew. There was a bowlful of water.

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But Gideon was still not convinced. So he said to God again, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew." That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

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Early in the morning, Gideon and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley. The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back now and go home.'" So twenty-two thousand men left and went home, while ten thousand remained.

But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink." Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go home." So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

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Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. During that night the Lord said to Gideon, "Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp." So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. The Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, as thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.

Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed."

His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands."

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When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands." Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies. He placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside the jars.

"Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon.'"

Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The other two companies blew their trumpets and smashed their jars, just as Gideon had told them to do. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

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When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the Midianite camp to turn on each other with their swords. The Midianite army fled in all directions. The Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh who had previously returned to their home, were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. Eventually Gideon and his men caught up with the Midianite leaders and they killed them. With just three hundred men Gideon had won an incredible victory for Israel and for the Lord.

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[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]

- a) *The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and gave him a vision to free Israel from the Midianite oppression. What vision has the Lord spoken to you that he wants you to accomplish?*
- b) *When Gideon called the men of Israel, they rallied to him immediately. They accepted him as their leader before they heard about the vision. Who are the people who are accepting you as their leader?*

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Gideon was the least likely to lead Israel. But when the Lord appeared to him and told him that he wanted to use Gideon to deliver Israel, Gideon rose to the challenge. At first he was not convinced, but then he accepted the call that God had placed on his life.

Before he led Israel against Midian, the Lord had Gideon destroy the altar to Baal and

the Asherah pole that the Israelites were using to worship false gods. His obedience to God is what caused the people to take notice of him. Before this time, he had made a habit of hiding himself. Do you remember where he was when the Lord first appeared to him? Yes, he was threshing wheat in a winepress.

When the time came for Gideon to blow the trumpet to call the Israelites to action, they already knew him and accepted him as their leader. Thirty-two thousand men rallied to his call. It was only after they came to him that Gideon told them what the Lord was going to do.

The Lord knew that there were too many men with Gideon for him to get the glory for the victory. So he told Gideon to send all those that were afraid home. Twenty-two thousand went home and ten thousand remained. The Lord told Gideon there were still too many men. After Gideon watched the men drink, the Lord directed him to separate three hundred from the rest. These were the men God had chosen to go with Gideon to deliver Israel.

Let us take a closer look at the principles of acceptance that we can learn from the life of Gideon. We will focus on four main observations, which are:

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1. When people are confident in the leader, they are confident in the vision.

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2. Acceptance is an ongoing process.

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3. People get on board with a leader who will take them where they want to go.

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4. The more attraction assets you have, the more attractive you become.

Let's get started with our first observation.

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The first observation about acceptance that we can make from the life of Gideon is this:

1. When people are confident in the leader, they are confident in the vision.

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Gideon was an unlikely leader. He certainly did not see himself as a leader. We can gain insight into his image of himself by seeing how he reacted when the angel told him that he would deliver Israel from the Midianites. After the angel spoke, Gideon responded, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house".

Despite Gideon's doubts, God used him. The people rallied around Gideon, the

youngest member of the weakest clan, and he became the leader of the most lopsided victory in the history of Israel.

The question to ask ourselves is this: Which comes first; the vision or the gathering of the people? I think that the answer depends on your perspective: The leader finds the vision first, and then the people. The people find the leader first, and then the vision.

If you see things from the perspective of a follower, the people accept the leader first, and then the vision. That is what the Law of Acceptance is all about. But if you are the leader, you know that the vision comes first for you. Leaders embrace the vision first, and then they look for people to help them achieve it.

Vision can be a powerful thing. It is easy to see that the vision came first for Gideon, because his calling came straight from God. But you do not need an angel of the Lord to visit you in person in order to have a powerful vision. Let us look at four things that vision gives a leader:

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1. Awareness – the ability to see

Leaders have to see the vision first; otherwise they will never be able to help the people see it. Gideon understood what his role was to be before anyone else did.

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2. Attitude – the faith to believe

It is one thing to possess the vision of what could happen. It is another to believe that you can make it happen. Initially Gideon had a very difficult time believing that he could free his country from the Midianites, but the angel helped him to overcome his doubt.

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3. Action – the courage to do

If moving from seeing to believing is a big step, then finding the courage to act on your belief is even bigger. Gideon had such a hard time with this phase that he put out a fleece to test God, not once but twice. Yet God was gracious and reassured Gideon, so he moved forward.

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4. Achievement – the hope to endure

Once a leader begins moving forward, his troubles have just begun. It takes perseverance to turn action into achievement. By the time Gideon faced huge obstacles, the people were firmly behind him.

The gift of the leader to the people is the vision. The gift of the people to the leader is the fulfillment of that vision. That is why God always puts the leader and the people together. But before the people are willing to follow and make the dream a reality, they have to accept the leader first. And that requires good leadership.

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The second observation about acceptance that we can make from the life of Gideon is this:

2. Acceptance is an ongoing process.

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All leaders have vision. But all people who possess vision are not leaders. I have known a lot of would-be leaders who had a vision but lacked the ability to get people to accept them as a leader. That is why the Law of Acceptance has such an impact. A compelling vision alone will not make someone a leader. Nor will a great vision automatically be fulfilled simply because it is compelling or valuable.

Once Gideon had the vision to deliver Israel from its enemies, he was not finished. He still needed to get the people to accept his leadership. That did not happen in an instant. Although God ordained the vision, Gideon had to devote his time and actions to fulfilling the vision.

As Gideon progressed from being an obscure member of a minor clan to a leader of the northern tribes, his influence grew in the way that ripples do when a pebble is dropped into a pond. Here are four things Gideon did to grow in his leadership influence.

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1. He started at home (Character)

A good leader first proves himself to the people closest to him. Your family and close friends know your character best and can tell when your actions align with it.

Gideon started with ten servants from his household. With their help, he was able to destroy the altar of Baal, build a new altar to God, and offer the sacrifice requested by God. We do not know how difficult it was for his servants to accept his leadership, but we do know they believed in him enough to take action.

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2. He won a key influencer (Charisma)

According to Bible, the men of the city of Ophrah were furious with Gideon's actions. When they discovered what he had done, they said to his father, Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it". In

that moment, Gideon's life was in the balance. And without help, he might have met his end.

But in that moment, Gideon won over a powerful ally, his father. Though Gideon described his clan as the smallest of the tribe of Manasseh, his father obviously had strong influence among the people in his city. They listened when he stood up to them. He not only supported his son, but he also mocked Baal by renaming his son Jerub-baal, which roughly translated means, "Let Baal plead for himself."

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3. He enlarged his circle (Credibility)

After you win a core group of people and they accept your leadership, it is possible to enlarge your circle of influence. When Gideon won the influence of his father Joash, he won over the entire city. The acceptance of his leadership had begun. And when he blew the trumpet to gather the people of his region, they came. Having won them, he extended the call beyond his borders and called on the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. And they all came! Even the people of Ephraim joined with him. Clearly, everyone was sold on Gideon as a leader.

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4. He moved when the time and influence were right (Culmination)

The truth of the matter is that so many people responded to Gideon's leadership that God had to send a bunch of them home. He told Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her send those who are afraid home." The number of followers was reduced to just three hundred, and they fought under Gideon's leadership. And God got the glory for their victory.

Just because a person has vision and occupies a leadership position does not necessarily mean that the people will follow. Before they get on board, they have to accept the leader. And that does not happen in an instant. Acceptance is an ongoing process.

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[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]

- a) *The Law of Acceptance says that people accept, or follow, the leader before they will accept, or follow, the leader's vision. As a leader you expect people to follow you. Here is a question: Would you follow you?*
- b) *All leaders have a vision. But not all people who have a vision are leaders. Is your leadership as convincing as your vision?*

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The third observation about acceptance that we can make from the life of Gideon is this:

3. People get on board with a leader who will take them where they want to go.

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How are you living your life? Are you on a mission? Or are you just making it day to day? Are you striving to succeed and take others with you? Or are you barely surviving? The answers to these questions have a major impact on whether people are accepting you as a leader. People who float along, reacting to life instead of pursuing their mission, are rarely taken seriously as leaders.

When the angel of the Lord came to him, Gideon was simply trying to survive. He had no mission or grand vision. He was hiding out in a winepress, hoping that he could secretly thresh some grain before the Midianites descended like locusts, consuming everything in their path. If he had tried to lead the people while maintaining that directionless mindset, people never would have accepted him as a leader. He never would have gained a following, and he never would have accomplished the liberation of Israel.

The people's unwillingness to participate would not have come from their unwillingness to free themselves from their enemies. It is just that people only get on board with a leader who they believe will take them where they want to go. And until Gideon had a vision for the future and a mission that would achieve that vision, he was not qualified to lead.

In the calling of Gideon, you can see a pattern that is fairly common for a person who receives a God-given vision and mission to fulfill. Here are the steps he took:

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1. He assumed responsibility.

A calling by God always begins with responsibility. I think people's natural tendency is to ask God to give the vision before they act. But God wants us to take action first. When we see an immediate need that touches our hearts or we have a burden, God wants us to work to meet that need.

Gideon knew the need of his family, the need for food. And he was taking action to fulfill that need. He was threshing wheat in the winepress. Perhaps the reason the angel called him a mighty man of valor was that he was risking his life by defying the Midianites. Gideon's willingness to take responsibility opened the door for God to ask him to step up to a whole new level of responsibility – to leadership.

When God calls you, do not over analyze what he says. It will cause you to do nothing. God is under no obligation to explain his reasons for his actions. He is much more likely to reward your obedience with an explanation than he is to

give an explanation to encourage your obedience. If you know God is asking you to do something, do not keep asking him why.

If you lack vision, do not sit still waiting for it to hit you like a bolt of lightning. When you see a need that tugs at your heart, take action. Address the need, and if God desires to speak to you and call you to take the next step, he will.

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2. He anticipated results.

When God asks us to move forward, there will be positive results. They may not be what we expect, but something good will happen. As God said in Isaiah 55:11, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Gideon was given every reason to anticipate positive results. The angel of the Lord promised, "I will be with you, and you will strike down the Midianites as if they were one man." To receive a vision and accomplish your mission, you must believe that God is faithful. You must have faith that he will achieve results and fulfill his promises.

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3. He accepted risks.

At some point, the only thing left to do is to act. That means accepting the risks and taking the appropriate action. Moving forward almost always involves an act of faith.

Once Gideon had gained confirmation that God was calling him to act, he needed to follow through. And he did. He gathered his people at the Spring of Harod, in the shadow of the army of Midian. From there, God delivered Israel's enemies into Gideon's hands.

Gideon never would have discovered his destiny or grown to his potential if he had not listened to God and then acted. Nor would the people have experienced God's blessing. That is why it is so important for leaders to sense and seize their calling.

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The fourth observation about acceptance or buy-in that we can make from the life of Gideon is this:

4. The more attraction assets you have, the more attractive you become.

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Proverbs 14:28 says, "The mark of a good leader is loyal followers; Leadership is

nothing without a following.” What made people want to follow Gideon? What caused people to accept his leadership? For that matter, what causes any followers to accept their leader?

Every person has some ability to attract others, based on attraction assets. When I say that, I am not talking about physical attractiveness. I am talking about qualities that are desirable in a leader. The greater the attraction assets a leader has, the more likely people will want to follow him or her.

There are many factors involved when it comes to why followers accept the leadership of a person. Anyone who has studied leadership could probably list dozens. But it is possible to narrow the list. Let us take a quick look at seven of the most important qualities that attract followers to a leader.

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1. Calling

Few things are as compelling to followers as a clear calling in the life of a leader. Someone who has received and accepted a calling usually possesses vision, passion, energy, and commitment. Gideon’s calling was certain. And once he accepted his calling, it transformed him. Beforehand he was a fearful man who doubted himself and asked for multiple signs to confirm his mission. Even as he began to take his first steps of obedience he acted at night. But once he embraced the truth of his calling, he became passionate and bold. With just three hundred men, he attacked and overcame an army of a hundred and twenty thousand warriors.

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2. Insight

People respect a leader who possesses keen insight, who has the wisdom to see the real issue in any situation and who can see what is ahead. Scripture says that God gave Gideon insight into the weak hearts of the Midianites before he was to attack their camp. By the time Gideon called his men to battle, he understood that God had assured their victory.

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3. Charisma

People are attracted to leaders who make them feel good about themselves. That, in a nutshell, is the secret of charisma. When Gideon invited the people of Ephraim to join in the pursuit of the dispersed Midianites, they reacted with anger. But Gideon was able to help them see the significance of their role, having captured and killed the princes of Midian.

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4. Talent

You do not need to look any farther than the entertainment industry to know that followers are highly attracted to people with talent. Actors and musicians are idolized for their natural gifts and talents. We do not know much about Gideon's natural abilities. But the angel called him a "mighty warrior" and instructed him to "go in the strength you have." More than likely, some of Gideon's talents were physical strength and courage.

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5. Ability

People love competence. They are naturally attracted to someone who can get things done. When we learned the Law of Respect, we learned that production, the ability to produce results, is the third level of leadership. At this level people follow a leader because of the results that he has produced for the team.

Gideon must have known that the people of Ephraim would be the most difficult people to convince to follow his leadership. He started with the people closest to him with whom he had strong relationships. But he did not attempt to get the people of Ephraim on board with him until he had proved his ability. And even then, he had to work to get them to accept him as leader.

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6. Communication Skills

A leader who cannot communicate his calling and vision has difficulty getting the people to understand and buy in to his leadership. Whenever Gideon spoke to the people, they understood and eagerly followed, even when they might have been better off resisting his leadership. And that leads us to the seventh quality.

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7. Character

It takes character to win over people's trust. The closer the leader is to the people, the greater the need for character. But it also takes character to keep the people going in the right direction. Gideon started out strong. He stood up when others would not. He displayed courage in the face of incredible odds.

Everyone possesses these seven qualities in various degrees. Some come naturally. Others must be fought for. The number of qualities you have, as well as the level of proficiency in each quality, will determine both the kind of people and the number of people who will follow you. The greater the diversity of assets you have, the greater the diversity of people who will follow you; the stronger the quality, the better the follower who is attracted to it. If you want to get people to accept you as a leader, work to increase the qualities that attract people to you.

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[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]

- a) *People will follow a leader who knows where he is going, and who will take them where they want to go. Where are you going? Why would anyone want to go with you?*
- b) *We must all develop and increase the qualities that make us more attractive for people to follow. How much effort are you giving to increasing your attraction assets?*

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Jesus had an amazing ability to attract people to himself. People accepted him and followed him wherever he went.

Think about when he called his disciples. In Matthew 4 we read that one day, as Jesus was walking besides the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers named Simon Peter and Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea because they were fishermen. Jesus walked up to them and said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed Jesus.

Jesus continued to walk down the beach and saw two other brothers named James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in the boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them also to follow him, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed them.

The Bible gives us no indication that Jesus knew these four men before he called them on the beach that day. We do not know if they knew Jesus or not, but the chances are they did not know his vision or mission in life. He had just begun his ministry and at this point was not that well known.

But something about Jesus compelled them to follow him. In both cases, it says that they left what they were doing at once and followed him. Evidently there was something about Jesus that attracted them to him. They accepted him as their leader. And this was long before they knew or understood what his purpose and vision was.

We see the same thing happen again in Matthew 9 when Jesus called Matthew. By this time Jesus had moved on from Galilee, so there is a very good chance that Matthew had no idea who he was. And yet, when Jesus called him, he immediately got up and followed him.

Towards the end of John 1 we see the calling of Philip and Nathaniel, two more of the twelve disciples that Jesus called. Within minutes of meeting Jesus, Nathaniel said these words to him: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." That is amazing, is it not? The level of acceptance that these men had for Jesus was so great that, within a short time of meeting him, they recognized him for the leader that he was. And, again, this was long before they understood what his vision was.

Clearly the disciples accepted Jesus as a leader long before they accepted his vision. It was only as they walked with Jesus and listened to him as he preached and taught the

people that they began to understand what his purpose was.

It was not only the disciples who accepted Jesus in this way. There were literally thousands of people who were drawn to him. When he spoke to the crowds and taught them about his kingdom, they recognized that there was something different about him. They respected him as a teacher, and even said that he taught as one with authority, not like the Pharisees and other religious leaders that they were accustomed to hearing.

When we think about why people accepted Jesus and were attracted to him, even before they really knew him, it is quite easy to understand why. Think about it. Jesus is the only person who has ever lived a sinless, perfect life. That means he was perfect in every area. Think about those seven qualities that make a leader attractive to followers. Jesus was perfect in all of them. If we had to score him on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being perfect, he would be a perfect 10 in every area. Let us quickly look at a few of those qualities in the life of Jesus.

When it came to calling, Jesus had the most important calling that a man has ever had. His Father called him to live a perfect life so that he could become the Lamb of God who would be the ultimate, once and for all, sacrifice for the sins of men. The Father loved us so much, that he sent his Son to fulfill this plan to reconcile man to himself.

Jesus was also perfect when it came to insight. He had an amazing ability to understand the motives of people's hearts. Remember the time that they brought a woman caught in adultery to him. They were trying to trick him into saying something against the law. But, Jesus knew the motives of their hearts, and simply said, "Let him who has no sin cast the first stone." He neither condemned the woman, which would prove he was not compassionate, nor did he disregard her sin, which would prove that he had no respect for the law. He knew that every person standing there ready to judge was guilty of sin himself. In the end, they all dropped their stones and walked away. Only after they had all walked away did Jesus forgive her and tell her to go and sin no more.

When it comes to communicating, Jesus was the master communicator. He knew exactly the right words to say at exactly the right time to get his point across. He was an incredible storyteller and told many parables to illustrate what he was talking about. He was not interested in having people admire him for his eloquent words. He wanted people to understand. That is why he communicated at their level, using words and pictures that they could understand.

Finally, in terms of character, Jesus was flawless. Character has to do with the real you, the inner you. It is what causes people to trust you and ultimately to respect you. Because Jesus was sinless, there were no faults in his character.

Jesus clearly exemplifies the Law of Attraction. He attracted people to him wherever he went. People accepted him first before they accepted his vision. That is how the Law of Attraction works.

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That brings us to the end of this lesson. In our next lesson we're going to look at the life of Josiah as we study the leadership Law of Victory. Great leaders always figure out a way to help the team to win. They just will not accept defeat because it is unacceptable to them. Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. But he had a heart to serve God. Throughout his reign he sought after God and led the nation in significant steps to revival. Scripture says of him, "As long as he lived, the people did not fail to follow the Lord, the God of their fathers." Josiah figured out what he needed to do to lead Israel in victory, and then he did it. That is what the Law of Victory is all about. On the screen right now are the scriptures that you should read to remind yourself of the story of Josiah.

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Let's pray as we bring this lesson to a close.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for helping me to grow as a leader. I ask that you would give me the courage to act on everything you prompt me to do, and help me to see the steps of obedience I need to take to follow you. My desire is to fulfill the plans, the purpose, the vision that you have for my life. I ask you to mold me and shape me into the kind of person that others can accept so that they will be able to accept the vision that you have given me to fulfill. In Jesus name I pray. Amen!