



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

S E R I E S

THE SUMMARY OF UNLEADER

Jane Overstreet
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Foreword

As you pick up this book, you may be thinking what I was thinking when I wrote it—"what the world does not need is one more book on leadership!" But we still need better leaders, and leaders need tools to help them keep growing. This book can be such a tool. The world is hungry for humble, godly servant leaders who understand why God grants them position and power. Leadership is never about us... That is God's intention and what the world so desperately needs.

Reflect on the stories of Saul and David, compare your experience, or gather with others to grow together. Doing so will give the Holy Spirit room to speak to your heart and guide you. May this book help you grow in your leadership as he intended and bring God joy, just like David's did.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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CHAPTER 1:
Does My Leadership Look More like Saul's or David's?

I'll never forget sitting in a friend's house in West Africa, listening to local leaders debate politics. "Do you really think it is possible he could get elected?" one asked. "Oh, for sure, but then he'd just succumb to the disease like everyone else," another answered. The question hung in the air: "Do you think it is possible for us to have a righteous leader, someone who won't just line his own pockets?" I replied, "It will probably have to be one of you... Who besides a follower of Jesus could hope to withstand the pressure of corruption long enough to bring lasting change?"

This led me to wonder: what about me? If suddenly handed more power, would my leadership shine with righteousness—or would I give in to temptation? Leadership is never about us. But too often, we mimic our broken cultures instead of reflecting God's kingdom. We replicate what we have experienced. Across the globe, many Christian leaders cite the same failures: "Prideful, always right," "Lack of integrity," and "Harsh, uncaring." Others confess their culture equates leadership with control. In Uganda, for example, the local word for leadership literally means "to eat." When you are the leader, you can eat anything you want, and no one can stop you.

Genuine Christlike leadership is inherently "counter-cultural." A survey by the Lausanne Movement's Leadership Development Working Group revealed that the top qualities of Christ-centered leadership are "Integrity, authenticity, excellent character," "Servant's heart, humble," and "Spiritually mature." Sadly, many Christian leaders fail by embracing "big boss" leadership, a corrupt, self-serving style at odds with God's heart.

As we see in Scripture, God does not measure leadership by size, fame, or wealth. Think of humble servants

like my old Sunday school teacher, Aunt Hildreth, or persecuted pastors in rural India who gave their lives for the gospel. By worldly standards, they may not rank highly, yet I am sure that their leadership brought God great joy. And that is the only standard that truly matters: Does our leadership bring God sorrow, like Saul's, or delight, like David's?

This book invites us to ask five fundamental questions:

- 1. Do I fear people more than God?
- 2. Do I "use up" people under my leadership, or do I build up and enable them?
- 3. Do I put my interests first (greed and self-preservation) or God's interests first?
- 4. Do I lead with integrity?
- 5. Do I let people get close enough to really love me?

These questions help us hold up a mirror to our leadership and honestly evaluate where we succeed or fall short. Measuring ourselves by any standard other than what God thinks is at best irrelevant and at worst sinful. If we truly long to bring God joy, we must separate ourselves from our broken cultural assumptions and realign our leadership with biblical values. Ultimately, does my leadership look more like Saul's or David's? Let us wrestle with that question and pray that we will lead in a way that honors and delights the Lord.

CHAPTER 2
Setting the Stage

Before tackling the five questions from the previous chapter, let's examine three background pieces. First, the choosing of an earthly king was a tragedy about rejecting God. Second, Samuel—prophet, judge, and "godly leadership model"—is central to these stories. Third, despite having so much in common, Saul and

David ended their lives in vastly different ways.

In 1 Samuel 8:1–8, Israel’s elders told Samuel: “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.” God replied, “It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.” From the beginning, God intended Israel to be unique—a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:1–8). But they insisted on looking like everyone else.

Samuel’s story, beginning in 1 Samuel 1–3, reveals a leader who walked closely with God from childhood. He consistently sought God’s direction, obeyed at all costs, and served as God’s mouthpiece. When faced with disappointment—his sons’ corruption, Israel’s demand for a king, or Saul’s failures—Samuel grieved but always returned to God for comfort and orders. His example shows a Christ figure who points us to what it means to lead wholeheartedly for God.

The most disturbing reality is how similarly Saul and David began. Both were chosen by God, anointed by Samuel, and supernaturally equipped. Saul was out searching for lost donkeys when Samuel said, “Has not the LORD anointed you ruler over His inheritance?” (1 Samuel 10:1). “As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart” (1 Samuel 10:9). David, likewise, was tending sheep when God directed Samuel to anoint him: “From that day on the Spirit of the LORD came on David in power” (1 Samuel 16:13).

Saul’s life ended in self-destruction and God’s lament, “I regret that I have made Saul king” (1 Samuel 15:11). David died peacefully as “a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14), receiving a promise that God would establish his kingdom forever.

We long to find some early sign explaining Saul’s tragic downfall, but Scripture shows both started with a genuine calling and anointing. This shows that any leader can fail if they turn away from God.

Before you read further, I encourage you to stop and pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal every hidden detail of your life and leadership. God may use this study to help you grow. Are you willing to search your heart and discover whether your leadership looks more like Saul’s or David’s? And, most importantly, will you let God address what you find?

CHAPTER 3
Question 1: Do I Fear People More Than God?

I was once in a beautiful old Methodist church in northern India, watching DAI staff teach on servant leadership using a case study about “Reverend Ogu-lu,” a Christian leader who wields power for personal gain. The bishop next to me leaned over with a grin and whispered, “You could have just said India instead of a fictional country, because that’s exactly how the top leaders behave here!”

Saul’s story in Scripture parallels countless modern tales. He began as a humble leader, hiding when Samuel wanted to announce his kingship. But once David appeared, people sang, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7). Saul’s anger and jealousy grew, and he tried to kill David.

A leader in Ethiopia once told me the honest (and chilling) truth: “When we older leaders see a younger leader with potential, we smash them!” He explained that we fear losing our positions. I never forgot that brutal image.

Early in Saul’s reign (1 Samuel 13), the Philistines gathered an enormous army. When Saul saw his own troops hiding and scattering, he grew desperate. Samuel had ordered him to wait seven days before offering sacrifices, but Saul panicked and sacrificed himself. “You have done a foolish thing,” Samuel told

him. “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you... now your kingdom will not endure” (1 Samuel 13:13–14).

Saul’s choice was logical—he saw men leaving, feared people more than God, and took matters into his own hands. This is a constant temptation for leaders: Whom do I trust more, God or myself?

David faced similar military threats. Right after becoming king (2 Samuel 5), the Philistines attacked. Instead of relying on his considerable experience, David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I go and attack the Philistines?” God said, “Go, for I will surely deliver them into your hands.” After the victory, the Philistines attacked again, and David once more asked God. This time the Lord gave different instructions. David waited for the “sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees” before attacking, fighting in partnership with God.

Both Saul and David were “chosen by God” and “filled with His Spirit,” yet Saul’s leadership grieved God, while David’s brought Him joy. The difference lies in daily, moment-by-moment trust. Will we do what works in our eyes, or do we ask God—even when His ways seem impractical? Leaders often slip into pride or fear of losing status. But like David, we can learn to fear God more than people and rely on Him for every decision.

Pressure reveals our true priorities. Do we take matters into our own hands, or do we humble ourselves and trust God? “Does my leadership look more like Saul’s or David’s?” How we answer that question shows whom we fear more—people or God.

CHAPTER 4
Question 2: Do I Use Up or Build Up People under My Leadership?

I heard an older Christian leader in India testify that a management course “turned his life and leadership

upside down.” He’d always been promoted because he got results—but he now realized he’d been using people and sometimes abusing them, driving them without regard for hours upon hours in pursuit of said results.

In 1 Samuel 14, Saul’s army faced overwhelming odds against the Philistines. Jonathan’s brave act triggered a victory, but Saul placed everyone under a rash oath: “Cursed be anyone who eats food before evening comes, before I have avenged myself on my enemies!” (v. 24). The troops, in distress, found honey in the woods but dared not eat. Jonathan, who hadn’t heard the oath, ate, revived, and exclaimed, “My father has made trouble for the country... How much better if the men had eaten...” (vv. 29–30).

Saul’s pride and thoughtless decree led his soldiers to sin (by eating the plunder improperly later) and nearly cost Jonathan his life. The men themselves had to intervene to rescue him. Saul was not lazy; he fought on many fronts. But 1 Samuel 14:52 notes that whenever he saw “a mighty or brave man, he took him into his service”—using the best people to accomplish his aims.

David, by contrast, began leadership fleeing from Saul. 1 Samuel 22:2 says, “All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander—about four hundred men.” Later, they grew to six hundred, including a priest who fled after Saul massacred the entire town of Nob.

These men endured constant hardship. In 1 Samuel 30, when the Amalekites burned Ziklag and took their families, David’s troops even talked of stoning him. “But David found strength in the LORD his God” (v. 6), inquiring if he should pursue. God said, “Pursue them... you will certainly overtake them and succeed” (v. 8). David and his men recovered everything. Over time, those ragtag followers became David’s “mighty men” (2 Samuel 23).

Saul recruited elite warriors and used them to achieve his plans. David inherited broken, desperate men, but led them in faithfulness, and they flourished. “When one rules over people in righteousness... he is like the light of morning at sunrise... that brings the grass from the earth” (2 Samuel 23:3–4). Godly leadership can transform ordinary people into mighty partners.

Some leaders—like Saul—unintentionally exploit others, justifying it as necessary to accomplish the task. Others—like David—enable people to grow into their God-given potential. Which approach do you choose? Are you “using up” people under you, or building them up to become all God intends them to be?

CHAPTER 5

Question 3: Do I Put My Interests Before God’s Interests?

In the 1980s in the United States, there were several high-profile Christian leaders who fell into horrific sin. Although sexual immorality was involved, the real focus was on money, power, and long-term corruption. These scandals became major news stories, and I was serving as the lawyer for several other prominent Christian leaders. I wanted to understand how such influential figures could end up in such a mess. A theme quickly emerged: they believed “the end justified the means.” Gradually, small decisions that were “not quite right” morphed into downward spirals of fraud and theft—all “for the sake of the ministry.”

From God’s reaction to Saul and David, we see how He views leaders who use their positions for personal interests. 1 Samuel 15 describes Saul’s failure. God commanded him through Samuel, “Go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them.” Saul attacked but spared King Agag and the best livestock. God said to Samuel, “I regret that I have made Saul king...” (vv. 10–11). But Saul insisted, “I

have carried out the LORD’s instructions... The soldiers took sheep and cattle... to sacrifice to the LORD.” Samuel answered, “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? ... Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king” (vv. 22–23). Though Saul finally admitted sin, he pleaded, “Please honor me before the elders...” (v. 30). “Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again... and the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel” (v. 35).

David also sinned gravely (2 Samuel 11–12): he committed adultery with Bathsheba and orchestrated her husband’s death. God’s message came through Nathan, “I anointed you king... I delivered you... If all this had been too little, I would have given you even more” (12:7–8). David confessed, “I have sinned against the LORD,” and Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die...” (vv. 13–14). When the child died, David got up, worshiped, and said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted... But now that he is dead... I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (vv. 22–23). Later, Bathsheba bore Solomon, and “The LORD loved him” (v. 24).

Though David failed, he repented deeply, and God forgave him completely. David’s normal pattern was putting God’s interests first. 2 Samuel 6 shows him dancing “before the LORD” with all his might, declaring, “I will celebrate before the LORD... I will become even more undignified than this” (vv. 21–22). In 2 Samuel 7, he prayed, “O Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your words are trustworthy...” (vv. 28–29). Unlike Saul—who never fully grasped God’s purposes—David consistently trusted God’s sovereignty, even after his worst failures.

Which example do we follow? Do we, like Saul, protect our image and position first, or do we, like David, seek God’s honor above all else?

CHAPTER 6

Question 4: Do I Lead with Integrity?

Who are you when no one is looking? Are you the same person when you are alone as you are when in public? Integrity means living consistently, whether in private or on the platform.

In my second semester as a college professor, I noticed a young man who sat at the back of my class, scowling. One day, I asked him for coffee. He admitted I reminded him of his mother. Then he explained that his father was a pastor—and so were all his mother’s subsequent husbands. “I’ve been a preacher’s kid in five different churches,” he laughed mirthlessly.

I have found that many young people who grew up in the church have little respect for it, but they yearn for true community and genuine love for Jesus. Is it because they’ve seen too much duplicity in our lives as Christian leaders?

By the end of his forty-plus years as king, Saul still had the Philistines at his borders and remained fearful and insecure. 1 Samuel 28:3–7 notes that Samuel had died, and Saul had expelled mediums, but when terror filled his heart, he inquired of the Lord and got no answer. Desperate, he disguised himself and went by night to a medium, violating his own decree. When this medium summoned Samuel, the prophet confirmed Saul’s doom. The only result of compromising his integrity was the certainty of defeat.

David, by contrast, behaved with remarkable consistency. Though anointed as king, he refused to kill Saul even when it seemed God had delivered Saul into his hands. 1 Samuel 24 recounts David’s men urging him to strike Saul in a cave. David merely cut off a corner of Saul’s robe and then felt conscience-stricken. “The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing... for he is the anointed of the LORD.”

Again, in 1 Samuel 26, David’s companion Abishai offered to kill Saul while he slept, but David refused, saying, “Who can lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed and be guiltless?”

Later, when Saul died, David grieved and executed the messenger who claimed credit for Saul’s death, shocked that anyone would raise a hand against “the LORD’s anointed” (2 Samuel 1). When Absalom rebelled, David refused to steal the ark of God or defend his own throne at the expense of others. Over and over, he showed integrity, trusting God for his position rather than seizing power.

Even when his enemies perished—Saul, Ish-Bosheth, and eventually Absalom—David mourned them instead of rejoicing. He never compromised for personal gain.

So, do your private life and your public actions match? That is the essence of integrity. Are you the same person whether people are watching or not?

CHAPTER 7

Question 5: Do I Let People Get Close Enough to Really Love Me?

“Just remember now,” the speaker continued, “one of your responsibilities as a pastor and a leader is to never let anyone get too close to you.... If people see you for who you really are, they will be disappointed.” Some seminaries still teach that leaders must keep a distance to maintain respect, but this notion is ridiculous and ungodly. Leaders need true friendships, because trying to go it alone... will kill you eventually.

Looking at Saul’s life, there’s no record of deep bonds. We see people like Abner and Jonathan serving him, but nothing suggests close friendships. Probably the closest relationship... was between Samuel and Saul, but Samuel mainly grieved over Saul’s failures.

By contrast, David's life overflows with rich relationships. He obviously let people get close to him and treasured relationships. Let's look at three examples:

1. The Three Mighty Warriors

2 Samuel 23:13–17 recounts how these warriors risked their lives to get David water from Bethlehem's well. When they brought it, "he poured it out before the LORD" because he saw it as "the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives." Their devotion was an act of worship for God, reflecting their deep love for David.

2. His Wife Michal

Michal, Saul's daughter, genuinely loved David. 1 Samuel 19:11–17 shows her warning David, letting him down through a window so he could escape. She even deceived her own father to buy him more time. Despite complexities in their marriage later, she risked her life for David.

3. Jonathan

Jonathan, Saul's heir, "loved David as himself." Right after David killed Goliath, Jonathan made a covenant with David and gave him his robe, tunic, and weapons. Even when Saul tried to kill David, Jonathan defended him, risking Saul's wrath and his own claim to the throne. Jonathan said, "May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father," recognizing David as the rightful future king. David's lament at Jonathan's death is one of the Bible's most poignant: "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me..." (2 Samuel 1:25–26).

In these stories, people willingly sacrificed for David because he loved and served them first. Leaders who love and serve those they lead engender those kinds of emotions in others. If you want to know how to earn the love of those you work with, it is really quite simple. Love them first.

So, how do those who work for you feel about you? Do they hold a deep respect and even love for you, or do they merely tolerate you out of duty or fear?

CHAPTER 8
Do I Lead from the Security of Knowing God's Love?

As we come to the close of this book, there is one more question you need to ask yourself: "Do I lead from the security of knowing God's love?" Then you must ask, "How do I learn to let God love me more?" We must have the security of resting in God's love to lead successfully from His perspective. It is foundational.

If you are a believer, you know God loves you and that God is love. But does this fact influence how you lead? Do you believe God's love cannot be earned or deserved, that He loves you deeply and instinctively? Or do you lead hoping you might earn His love through the outcomes of your work? Because that is bad theology from beginning to end.

Saul never understood God's love. Though God called and anointed him, we never see him resting in that love. Instead, he feared people's opinions, jealously guarded power, and consulted a medium for comfort rather than trusting God. In the end, God turned the kingdom over to David.

David sinned too, but consistently he let God love him and loved God in return. Psalm 51 and Psalm 63 reflect his passionate relationship with God: "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you." Even when David failed, he repented and relied on God's unfailing love to restore him.

Letting God love you, then, is crucial. We love God because he first loved us. It is not a forced discipline; it is responding to the One who already loves you completely. Learning to rest in God's love changes your perspective on everything—diminishing fear, frustration, and stress.



To lead from the secure place of knowing God’s love, there are three simple but profound practices:

- 1. Spend time alone with God daily. Seek his face, listen to him, do this in whatever way works best for you, but make it non-negotiable.
- 2. Practice the spiritual disciplines. Prayer, fasting, solitude, Bible study, worship, tithing—all of these help shape your relationship with God.
- 3. Regularly celebrate and rest with those you love. God designed us to need rest. Time off, family celebrations, and honoring the Sabbath are a must.

Suppose you choose daily to follow God with all of your heart and demonstrate that by following these three steps. I can guarantee that you will succeed. You will bring joy to God’s heart. Let your life and leadership look more like David’s than Saul’s. The world may not notice, but God will.

