

A Lesson on Leadership: Gideon

Read Judges Chapter 6-8:

<https://www.olivetree.com/blog/a-lesson-on-leadership-gideon/>

The content of this blog on Gideon and leadership came from the [Maxwell Leadership Bible Notes](#).

PEOPLE BUY IN TO THE LEADER, THEN THE VISION

At leadership seminars I field a lot of questions about vision. Invariably someone will come up to me during a break, give me a brief description of an evolving vision, and ask,

“Do you think my people will buy in to my vision?”

I always respond the same way:

“First tell me this—do your people buy in to you?”

Many believe that if the cause is good enough, people will automatically buy in to it and follow. But that’s not how leadership works. People don’t at first follow worthy causes; **they follow worthy leaders who promote worthwhile causes**. People buy in to the leader first, then the leader’s vision. Listeners filter every message through the messenger who delivers it.

You cannot separate the leader from the cause he promotes. It’s not an either/or proposition; the two always go together.

GIDEON AND THE LAW OF BUY-IN

Who would have picked Gideon as a leader? Certainly not Gideon; he didn’t even see himself as a leader. *“Pardon me, my lord, but how can I save Israel?”* asked Gideon of the angel who told him that God wanted to use him to defeat the Midianites. *“My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family”* ([Judg 6:15](#)).

Despite Gideon’s doubts, God used him. The people rallied around Gideon, and he led Israel to the most lopsided victory in the nation’s history.

THE ANATOMY OF BUY-IN

Gideon progressed from being an obscure member of a minor clan to a leader of the northern tribes. He grew as a leader through several stages:

1. Started at home (character)

A good leader first proves himself to those closest to him. Gideon started with 10 household servants. With their help, he destroyed an altar of Baal, built a new altar to God, and offered the sacrifice requested by God. Would those around you consider you to be a man of “CHARACTER”?

2. Won a key influencer (charisma)

The men of Ophrah grew furious with Gideon when they discovered he had destroyed Baal's altar. "Bring out your son," they ordered his father, Joash. "He must die" ([Jdg 6:30](#)). Yet Gideon won over a powerful ally in his father. Joash stood up for his son and spared Gideon's life.

3. Broadened his circle (credibility)

Gideon won over his city by winning the influence of Joash, then quickly won the allegiance of the Abiezrites (the people of his region), along with tribes beyond his borders: Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali. Even the people of Ephraim joined him. Once a core group of people buy in to your leadership, it's possible to broaden your circle of influence. How would someone perceive your credibility?

4. Moved at the right time (culmination)

So many people bought into Gideon's leadership that God had to send a bunch of them home ([Jdg 7:2](#)). God reduced the number of Gideon's followers to 300. Yet when they fought under Gideon's leadership, they won a great victory—and God received the glory.

SEVEN ASSETS FOLLOWERS WANT IN A LEADER

People always ask, "Why should I follow you?" Leaders must understand that they themselves go on display before they ever get the chance to display their vision. **Once followers gain confidence in the leader, they will feel confident about the vision.** Note seven qualities that attract people to a leader:

1. Calling

Few things are as compelling as a leader's clear calling. Beforehand, Gideon had lived in fear, doubted himself, and asked for multiple signs to confirm his mission. But once he embraced his calling, passion and boldness filled his heart.

2. Insight

People respect a leader with insight, wisdom to see the issues, and vision to see what lies ahead. God gave Gideon insight into the weak hearts of the Midianites. By the time Gideon called his men to battle, he understood that God had assured their victory.

3. Charisma

People flock to leaders who make them feel good about themselves. When Gideon invited the people of Ephraim to join in pursuing the Midianites, they reacted angrily. But Gideon helped them see the significance of their role by reminding them that they had captured and killed the Midianite leaders ([Jdg 8:1-30](#)).

4. Talent

Look no further than the entertainment industry for evidence that followers swarm around talent. While we don't know much about Gideon's natural abilities, the angel called him a "mighty warrior" and instructed him to "go in the strength you have" ([Jdg 6:12, 14](#)). More than likely, Gideon possessed both physical strength and courage.

5. Ability

People feel a natural attraction to someone who can get things done. Gideon didn't attempt to get the Ephraimites on board until he had proven his ability.

6. Communication Skills

A leader who cannot communicate his calling and vision has trouble getting anyone to buy in to his leadership. Whenever Gideon spoke to his people, they understood him and eagerly followed.

7. Character

It takes character to win and maintain trust. Gideon started out strong, standing up when others wouldn't. He displayed courage in the face of incredible odds. But in the end, a flaw in his character betrayed both him and the people. After his victories, Gideon created an idol and erected it in Ophrah: "All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family" ([Jdg 8:27](#)).