

Introduction: Whether from Deming, Blanchard or someone else, current management theory and training emphasizes a good manager must adapt his or her management style to each individual he or she is managing. *** In 1991 I participated in an intense three day management seminar where we were instructed in this management method. It used case studies, directed discussions with peers, and even clips from classic movies, including 'High Noon'. We used Blanchard's material and learned the catchy title for his method: 'different strokes for different folks'. A month before the seminar we all filled out a long questionnaire. For each question we were given information about a staff person and the task to be accomplished. We were given four choices as to how we would manage this situation. Little did we realize the four choices represented the four most common management styles; and, the test was rigged so we should have scored twenty five percent for each style. I was seventy five percent in teacher plus coach. In other words, I managed people by what was comfortable for me. I realized I needed to make changes in how I managed people. *** This approach to management was discovered by big corporations after investing billions of dollars over multiple decades so managers could get the most out of employees to maximize productivity and profit. Yes! Truth can be discovered while seeking a better bottom line. *** In our passages this morning we have a case study from Scripture about a bad king, and the words of The Savior – both teaching the same truth corporations discovered by the 1980s. The best leaders are leaders who serve their servants. When a worker is treated with kindness and respect, he or she will do better work and be loyal to his or her boss. *** Let's discover this truth in our passages.)

I. Rehoboam misses an opportunity to mend a grievance by refusing to listen to the elders, then the tribes fall into idolatry.
(*1 Kings 12:1-17, 25-30*)

A. After all Israel made Rehoboam king, he rejects a request by the people to lighten the load of his father Solomon and says he will be tougher than his father. (*Verses 1-17*)

1. Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, because all Israel had come to make him king. (*Verse 1*)

Names: Rehoboam means 'he has enlarged the people'. Solomon ruled more people than David. Shechem means 'back / shoulder'. It was a powerful pagan city when Jacob and his sons arrived (*Genesis 34*).

Unity: Israel is more united at the beginning of Rehoboam's reign than under his grandfather David.

2. Jeroboam had fled to Egypt, but the people call him back, and together they ask Rehoboam to lighten his father's heavy yoke. (*Verses 2-4*)

Context: Jeroboam ('his people will contend') was a man of standing from Ephraim who served under Solomon. But after Ahijah ('my brother is Yahweh') the prophet told him he would rule over ten tribes, Solomon tried to kill him, so he fled to Egypt. (*1 Kings 11:26-40*)

Lighten heavy yoke of father: Solomon made their yoke severe, so they request Rehoboam to make the severe service and heavy yoke lighter. They want him to serve their needs.

Servant leaders have loyal and obedient servants

3. He asked them to give him three days, then he consulted his father's elders who told him if he would serve this people and speak good words to them, they would be his servants forever. (*Verses 5-7*)

Three days: Rehoboam asks for time to give their request adequate consideration.

Elders: The elders gave him a wise answer: serve them and speak well to them. They ask him to reverse his father's policies. We can conclude Solomon did NOT listen to their advice!

Will serve you: Their conclusion shows supreme wisdom: And they will serve you forever!

If he will be their servant leader they will always be loyal and obedient servants to him.

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4. He forsook the elders' counsel and he consulted the young men who grew up with him and stood before him: saying, what do you counsel we should answer this people who said lighten your father's yoke? (*Verses 8-9*)

Forsake elders: He chose to ignore and walk away from sound wisdom.

Consult peers: Instead he turns to the rash young men, 'lackeys' who had always supported him.

5. They told him to respond harshly and to add to his father's heavy yoke. (*Verses 10-11*)

Harsher: They used a metaphor that his little (finger) will be thicker than his father's torso; then, 'bluntly' he would attach sharp metal to his father's whips to cut their skin deeper!

6. Then Jeroboam and all the people came on the day Rehoboam advised they come, and he answered them harshly, forsaking the elders' counsel and quoting the young men exactly; because, this was from Yahweh to establish the word of Ahijah. (*Verses 12-15*)

Harsh to Jeroboam: Rehoboam's attitude, actions and response to his people consistently show him to be hard-hearted and clueless. This is the result of Solomon's influence on him after he lusted for foreign women and they turned him from Yahweh into deep and destructive idolatry (*1 Kings 11:1-13*).

NOT listen to people: Unlike his grandfather David, he would not listen to anyone, especially the people who were his subjects.

Yahweh's Word: Yahweh said Solomon's punishment would fall on his son (*1 Kings 11:35*).

7. All the people of Israel proclaim they have nothing to do with David or his family: they will go home and leave David to look after themselves: only two tribes were left. (*Verses 16-17*)

David isolated: Harsh treatment of people will drive them away. We should ask ourselves IF we have ever responded harshly to others that we would be convicted by God to repent, confess, and ask to be changed by Him IN Jesus.

Only two left: Since Jerusalem was in the tribe of Benjamin, it was counted with Judah.

- B. As Jeroboam begins to rule the ten breakaway tribes, he sets up idols in the north and the south, and this was sin. (*Verses 25-30*)
1. Then Jeroboam built Shechem in hills of Ephraim, and he lived in it; then, he went from there and built Penuel. (*Verse 25*)
Good name: Penuel means ‘facing God’. Ahijah said as long as Jeroboam walked in God’s ways, He would be with him. This is a good start.
 2. Then he said in his heart: IF this people will go up to offer sacrifices to Yahweh in Jerusalem, their heart will return to Rehoboam and they will kill me and return to him. (*Verses 26-27*)
Needless fear: This is a normal human fear, but he has a Word from The Covenant God through His prophet. He should put this fear behind him!
 3. Then he took counsel and made two calves of gold, and he said: It is far for you to go to Jerusalem, behold your gods Israel who brought you out of Egypt; and, he put one in Bethel (‘house of God’) and one in Dan (‘judge’). (*Verses 28-29*)
Bad counsel: Aaron and all Israel were severely condemned for making one calf of molten gold. Jeroboam will be judges for forsaking the house of God in Jerusalem. Knowing this, whatever possessed him to make twice as many for Israel?
Doubles down on idolatry: Dan was near the northern border of the ten tribes and Bethel near the southern border. Jeroboam doubled down on Aaron’s idolatry!
 4. And this thing became sin, and the people went before the one as far as Dan. (*Verse 30*)
Sin: Just because they were mistreated by the king is no excuse to commit a major sin after breaking away. Let us be prayerfully careful that if we are ever mistreated we will not fall into idolatry!

II. Jesus taught His followers not to rule by exercising lordship and authority, but to achieve great leadership by being a minister and servant of all. (*Mark 10:42-45*)

- A. After James and John sought to be first, Jesus said His followers were not to rule as lords over others; but, if they desire to be great, they will be ministers (deacons). (*Verses 42-43*)
1. After Jesus had called them to Himself, He says to them: (*Verse 42a*)
Context: James and John had just pushed themselves forward for special favor from Jesus, and the ten were indignant (*Mark 10:35-41*).
 2. You have known those considered to rule the nations are exercising lordship over them, and the great ones are exercising authority over them. (*Verses 42bc*)
Authority rule: Jesus describes pagan rulers and pagan great people as leading by intimidation, acting as authoritarian lords. Sounds like Rehoboam, king of Judah.
 3. But, it shall NOT be thus among you. (*Verse 43a*)
Different: Those who follow Jesus must live in a way that is noticeably different than pagans!
 4. Whoever is desiring to be great among you all, he shall be your minister. (*Verses 43b*)
Deacon: The Greek word is *di-ak-on-os* (deacon) and it means servant.
- B. And the one desiring to be first will be servant of all because He did not come to be ministered to by others, but to minister and give His life a ransom. (*Verses 44-45*)
1. Whoever is desiring to be foremost among you all, he shall be servant of all. (*Verse 44*)
Slave: The same word is used for servant and slave. Paul told the church in Rome to be slaves to obedience (to Christ) to be righteous ... and being set free from sin you are slaves to God, leading to holiness and life (*Romans 6:16-22*). So, let us also be slaves, serving all people in Jesus’ Name. And, may we live our lives, by the truth that all who desire to be first must give themselves as servants of all.

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2. Because even The Son of Man did not come to be ministered unto but to minister. (*Verse 45a*)
Greatest IS deacon: Jesus, by being God’s Son, is the greatest man ever. But He says He did not come to be served by people, but to serve people. May we all be like Him in serving others!
3. And to give His life a ransom in the place of many. (*Verse 45b*)
Give life: All sinners are slaves to sin (*John 8:34*). Slaves can only be set free when someone pays a ransom price. Jesus sets us free from death by giving His life as a ransom. IF necessary, may all of us IN Jesus be willing to lay down our lives to tell others Jesus paid the ransom price for them.
Substitute: With these last words, Jesus says He will pay the ransom price that is too great for us to pay (*Psalms 49:7-9*). The price for sin is death. (See *Romans 3:21-26*)

The Greatest Leader came to serve and give His Life

Bottom line: Rehoboam teaches us by his negative example that God wants all His people to be willing to serve others because it motivates to mutual service among all His people. Then, when the ‘sons of thunder’ exhibit Rehoboam’s spirit of heavy handed authority, Jesus gives the wise answer that to be first among His people requires a commitment to serve others as a his master. For us, when we serve Master Jesus, we will be good servant leaders.

Conclusion: When Rehoboam refused to reduce the heavy yoke his father had put on his subjects, but rather increased the yoke, over eighty percent of them rebelled and broke away: sadly, into the sin of double idolatry. Nine hundred years later The Savior said: whoever wants to be first must be servant of all, because He came to serve and give His life for many.

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How loyal and obedient to Jesus are we?