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**Rehoboam:
If You Will
Be Kind**

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Series: Living Legends - Part 3

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Rehoboam: If You Will Be Kind

I- THE END OF AN ERA

An era has ended. The wisest man who ever lived is dead, and a dynasty has drawn to its conclusion as one of history's most powerful men gradually drifted away from allegiance to the God who made him who he was.

They just buried King Solomon. The king, who in his prime possessed such wealth that rulers traveled for miles just to behold his fortune, who possessed such wisdom that his servants knelt in awe, just waiting for words to fall from his lips, has died. Somehow, it seemed he was too powerful to die, too rich to die. But the Psalmist recognized the fallacy of that kind of thinking, and he reminded us in Psalm 49 that:

the ransom for life is costly, no payment is ever enough—
that he should live on forever and not see decay.

For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others.

Their tombs will remain their houses forever, their dwellings for endless generations, though they had named lands after themselves.

But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish. (Psalm 49:8-12 NIV)

Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases;

for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him. (Psalm 49:16,17 NIV)

The Scriptures say of this man Solomon: "Wiser than all men was he...". "Richer than all men was he..." as well. And yet, like all men, he had to die, and *when he died*, he left it all behind. In his youth, his every word had borne testimony to the grace of his God. But, ah, *as Solomon grew old* his wives turned his heart away from God. And because, as Solomon grew old the light of his life was no longer God, those glowing years of faithfulness faded

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into tarnished years of idolatry. And all the king's horses, and all the king's men couldn't make Solomon a man of God again. And so the final days of his life caused an epitaph to be written on his tombstone that had fallen from his own pen... "vanity, vanity, all is vanity."

Now he is gone. And the volumes of history must needs turn their pages to yet another chapter in the life of God's people; a chapter destined to mark the beginning of an era of division and strife, of needless death and destruction, as etched into the fabric of His Holy Word, God brings to life yet another of His living legends, Solomon's son. He was destined to reign on his father's throne, but he was destined to draw asunder his father's kingdom, as well. The story begins to unfold in II Chronicles 9.

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years.
Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of
David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as
king. (II Chronicles 9:30 NIV)

And so another generation awakens to take control of a nation. An administration characterized by youthful exuberance rises to the throne, and a whole era of tradition and pomp and circumstance now gives way to the harsh realities of young men on their way up the ladder of success. And at the top, at least for the moment, is a young man, the son of his father's favorite wife. His name is Rehoboam.

History is not too kind to Rehoboam. He took a nation, which was the talk of the then-known world for its strength and its natural resources, and through immaturity and greed, turned it into a civil-war battleground and eventually into a has-been kingdom. Once again, God is clearly defining how to and how not to be a leader. In this man's case, it was instruction by negative example. The title of our lesson is: "If You Will Be Kind." Our outline is:

- I- The End of an Era (II Chronicles 9:30)
- II- High Noon at the Palace (II Chronicles 10:1-6)
- III- If You Will Be Kind (II Chronicles 10:7-18)
- IV- Learning to Lead (I Peter 5:2-6)

Let's take a journey now through the pages of the life of this young man who now attempts to step into the shoes of the wisest man in history. Let's look and see just how much wisdom rubbed off on Mr. Rehoboam. We continue reading II Chronicles, as

chapter 10 unveils the first major incident in his reign as king:

Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all the Israelites had gone there to make him king.

When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt.

So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him:

Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.

Rehoboam answered, "Come back to me in three days." So the people went away.

Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. "How would you advise me to answer these people?" he asked.

They replied, "If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants."

But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him.

He asked them, "What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, 'lighten the yoke your father put on us'?"

The young men who had grown up with him replied, "Tell the people who have said to you, 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter'—tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist.

My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions'."

Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, "Come back to me in three days."

The king answered them harshly. Rejecting the advice of the elders,

he followed the advice of the young men and said, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."

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So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from God, to fulfill the word the Lord had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.

When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!" So all the Israelites went home.

But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.

King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem.

So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. (II Chronicles 10:1-19 NIV)

II- HIGH NOON AT THE PALACE

Have you ever looked back on your life, or on the life of someone you have studied about in history, and thought to yourself, "how different it all would have turned out, had it not been for that one major mistake?" The difference between the greats of the ages and the goats of the ages has often been told in the story of one simple wrong decision. But having made that decision, they altered the entire course of history. The passage we just read is such a moment in time.

Here is a chance for healing and reconciliation. Here is a chance for a demonstration of humility and meekness. Here is a chance for the ways of God to overshadow the ways of man. Here is a chance for the man of God to demonstrate the heart of God. Enter the saga of Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

We might call it the tale of Rehob and Jerry! Jerry is the leader of the minority party who opposed the harsh, totalitarian policies of Rehob's dad, Sol. But men didn't oppose Sol and stay around long enough to talk about it. So Jerry has been in exile in Egypt, awaiting his chance to return to his homeland safely. Now he sees the chance.

Why, Sol's funeral procession had barely disbanded when, riding into town like a band of outlaws in a Class B Western, comes Jerry with more than half of Israel by his side.

The music swells...

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The angry entourage approaches the palace...

The music softens...

It is...high noon!

Out comes Reheb.

Up steps Jerry.

Jerry speaks...

“Your father made our lives miserable, Reheb. He put a yoke on us we could not bear. He put us in forced labor camps, forced us to build the temple and his extravagant estate. We’ve had it, Reheb. But we’re men of peace. We’ve come bearing an olive branch. Here’s our offer: lighten the load; ease the burden; be reasonable; and we will remain your loyal servants to the end. Is that too much to ask?”

Reheb’s eyes were cold as steel, but he had enough of his father’s wisdom not to make a decision of this magnitude without seeking counsel first. So he told Jerry to find the nearest Holiday Inn and cool his heels for three days, while he pondered the possibilities of this proposal of peace.

His first move was a wise one. He went to the elderly men who had served his father and asked them what to do. Their response was classic. It was this:

“If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.”

(II Chronicles 10:7 NIV)

“If you will be kind...they’ll serve!”

A godly dose of wisdom to those who would lead God’s people:

“If you will be kind...they’ll serve!”

III- IF YOU WILL BE KIND...

No syllabus on Christian leadership ought to be without this verse. It is God’s Word to those who would lord it over their flocks, over their employees, over their families. It is a word of wisdom from the elderly to the young. It says:

“Don’t get enamored with your new-found power. A position of authority is not a license to motivate by fear; but rather to lead by love.”

Oppress those you lead and you are only buying time until the revolution. Lead by example and you build a following. Lead

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by intimidation and you build a platform on beams of sand. When the winds of adversity begin to blow, they will crumble, and so will you. Wise words... “If you will be kind, they’ll serve...”.

That should have settled it for Rebob. He could avert a revolution, assure a smooth transition into power, and build a following that would guarantee him a successful reign. All he had to do was take the advice of some men who had paid their dues and had learned what life was all about...the hard way.

But that would have required one thing Rebob didn’t have, the humility to be a godly leader. So instead, he calls a meeting of his college fraternity buddies, all of whom were as wet behind the ears as he was, and he asks them what to do.

His courageous contemporaries said this:

“Put the pedal to the metal, man. Turn up the thermo and let ‘em roast. Let’s show Jerry and his half-baked posse what real oppression is like. Tell ‘em your dad’s gonna look like a teddy bear next to you. Tell ‘em they ain’t seen nuthin’ yet.”

So the votes are in. The aged vote for temperance and mercy. The young men vote for a reign of terror. Rebob now turns a deaf ear toward experience and listens instead to those who excited his emotions and inflated his ego.

And in one day, this young king, simply by taking the wrong advice, ripped to shreds the kingdom of his grandfather, David, and finished what was left of his father Solomon’s empire. In one day, mind you, he destroyed what God took two generations to build...and all because he did not understand that the *basic quality needed to be a leader is kindness*.

IV- LEARNING TO LEAD

Peter understood that. And in one of his letters to the young leader’s club, he wrote these words: (Amplified Version)

Tend (nurture, guard, guide and fold) the flock of God that is [your responsibility], not by coercion or constraint, but willingly; not dishonorably motivated by the advantages and profits [belonging to the office], but eagerly and cheerfully;

Not domineering [as arrogant, dictatorial, and overbearing persons], over those in your charge, but being examples (patterns and models of Christian living) to the flock (congregation).

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And [then] when the Chief Shepherd is revealed, you will win the conqueror's crown of glory.

Likewise, you who are younger *and* of lesser rank, be subject to the elders (the ministers and spiritual guides of the church)—[giving them due respect and yielding to their counsel]. Clothe (apron) yourselves, all of you, with humility [as the garb of a servant, so that its covering cannot possibly be stripped from you, with freedom from pride and arrogance] toward one another. For God sets Himself against the proud (the insolent, the overbearing, the disdainful, the presumptuous, the boastful)—[and He opposes, frustrates and defeats them], but gives grace (favor, blessing) to the humble.

Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, (I Peter 5:2-6 Amplified Bible)

Had Rehob read those words and heeded them, the history of Israel would not have had its pages stained at least with this one sea of rebellion. His elders tried essentially to say the same thing, but to no avail.

On the back page of this lesson is a chart, dividing this passage into how to, and how not to be a leader. Our assignment for this week is to use that grid as a guideline to determine how we are doing in the area of godly leadership, as pastors, as elders, as teachers, as employers, as supervisors, as parents. Are we simply becoming "Rehobs" (men and women who lead with arrogance and condescension)? Or are we learning to be the kind of shepherds Peter spoke about? Let's look more closely at God's prescription for leadership as found in I Peter 5.

In a nutshell it says this:

| <u>God's leader leads by:</u> | <u>He NEVER leads by:</u> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Guiding | Coercion |
| Encouraging | Greed |
| Demonstrating | Intimidation |

The Sensitive Shepherd

The first characteristic of a godly leader is sensitivity. He is to lead men and women the way a shepherd leads his sheep. He is to nurture them, feed him, and care for their needs. *If he will be kind*, then they will always serve them. So he is to be a *feeding* shepherd. Secondly, he is to be a *guarding* shepherd. He is to

protect those he leads from harmful influence, from the attacks of an enemy that would catch them unaware. Thirdly, he is to be a *guiding* shepherd. He not only stops them when he knows the growling wolf lurks behind the rocks ahead, but he is to take them by the hand and lead them up to higher planes, where greener grass and fresher air await them. God's kind of leader *guides* his sheep. And fourthly, God's kind of shepherd *folds* his sheep. He lovingly envelops them; he circles around them, removing things that would trip them up, but leaving things they need to experience if they are to mature. He lovingly surrounds them with his love.

The Encouraging Shepherd

So God's kind of man or woman leads sensitively. Rehob didn't understand that. He did not see his responsibilities as a leader as much as he saw his privileges as a leader. Immaturity envisions leadership in that way. Try it. Give a little child a position of leadership before his time. You'll see what I mean. But there is more. According to Peter, the godly leader is typified not only by a spirit of sensitivity, but by a spirit of encouragement, as well. The godly leader, according to Pete, leads *willingly*. It takes no external pressure to inspire him to do his job. He does not have to be dragged to the office or to the church or to the field of service. He is there early, quickly, alertly, and excitedly. Then Peter adds the ingredient of eagerness. More than just willing, he is *eager* to lead. And more than that, he does so *cheerfully*. The godly leader illustrates joy, and joy is contagious. If the man in charge has a smile on his face, the whole office radiates. If he comes in with a spirit of defeat, watch the staff slowly take on the nature of a loser. God's leader leads *willingly, eagerly, cheerfully*.

The Model Shepherd

Finally, the godly leader is a model shepherd. He or she leads by example. They never tell you what to do; they show you what to do. They get their hands dirty to demonstrate that they are not instructors, but shepherds. And shepherds lay down their lives for their sheep. The godly leader won't do things he or she may have the right to do if doing them might damage the tender heart of one of the sheep. They won't go to that place, or do that thing, lest they cause one who follows to stumble. He or she won't say anything that might be misunderstood or offensive to even one of his sheep. The model shepherd seeks to be blameless, "without

rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse world”.

How Not to Lead

And Peter, lest he leave too much to the imagination, gives us specifically what characteristics a leader is not to have as well. He says God’s kind of leader does not attempt to inspire his followers by pressure to conform, guilt, or fear of failure. He or she is not leading for personal gain, so the task at hand is judged by what it can do for others, not for him. He is never arrogant or condescending; not dictatorial or demanding, not overbearing or obnoxious, not domineering, seeking to control people as an end in itself. Instead, Peter says, that God’s leader is clothed in a garb of humility; it wraps itself about him until it becomes characteristic of his nature. He respects the counsel of his elders, and graciously submits to whatever authority God places over him, knowing that only then can he expect those under him to submit as well.

I don’t know about you, but I think Peter had been reading II Chronicles. I think his heart must have been racing back to that moment in history when a young man named Rehoboam was given authority beyond his capacity, and by listening to unwise counsel and yielding to a spirit of arrogance, divided the kingdom of God’s people and shattered the image of God’s nation before an unbelieving world.

He had been given good advice. He had been told, “Rehob, if you will be kind to these people and please them, and give them a favorable answer, then they will always be your servants.” “Always...?” “Yes, Rehob, always.”

So there he is...King Rehob strutting his stuff, flexing his muscles, exercising his new-found power. His first move as a monarch, then, is to send Adoniram, his Secretary of Labor, out into the field to mobilize the troops and get this show on the road. Rehob follows closely behind to see his subjects cringe in fear as they line up to serve their ruler. But it didn’t go according to the script. They stoned Adoniram to death, and Rehob ran as fast as could, tripping over his royal robes as he ran. He hopped into his royal limo and raced back to Jerusalem like a fugitive outdistancing the law. And the kingdom was divided. And the Scripture records,

Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to
this day. (verse 19)

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More about Rehob in the next lesson, but this much we know. He had the whole world in his hands. All he had to do was humble himself and become God's kind of leader, and he could have walked in the shoes of his father, Solomon, full of wisdom, full of power.

If God has placed you in a position of leadership... in the church, in your home, in your business, in your ministry...pay close attention to the story of Rehob and Jerry. Your call to lead is not the license to drive, but the opportunity to serve. It is God's hand laid gently upon you, asking you to lead by example, to guide, to guard, to nurture, to fold those He has lovingly placed in your charge Lead God's way and men will follow. And never, ever forget...

If you will be kind to these people, and please them, and give them a favorable answer—they will always serve!

The Marks of a Leader...
(from I Peter 5)

How to lead...

How NOT to lead...

Nurture: feed tenderly

Not by coercion: not by pressure

Cuard: protect cautiously

Not by constraint: not by guilt or fear

Guide: lead carefully

Not for personal gain

Fold: envelop lovingly

Not arrogant: no condescending spirit

Willingly: with external pressure

Not overbearing: no obnoxious spirit

Eagerly: not passively

Not domineering: no controlling spirit

Cheerfully: without a negative spirit

As Examples: leading by demonstrating servanthood

As Models of Christian Living: exemplary in behavior



**Clothed With Humility
Respecting the Counsel of Elders
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