

I would like to share with you an interesting contrast that I have found in studying the Bible. It deals with two different men who were placed in the same basic position: each was offered great power. These two men were Gideon and Saul. Let us look for a moment at their response to these offers in Judges 6:11-16 (Gideon) and 1 Samuel 9:21 (Saul). You can see that their responses are almost identical; each expresses great humility. We find next that the Spirit of the Lord entered into both of these men as they led their nation to a great victory. But we see a vast difference between them. Gideon's battle cry was, `for the Lord and for Gideon`, but we find that Saul was extremely jealous of anyone but him receiving the glory. Then, Gideon was offered the position king after his great victory, but he refused. He knew how to handle his power, and he knew that God was the only true king of his people. But Saul grabbed for all the power that he could, even at one time usurping the priesthood when Samuel was delayed. For this and other disobediences, the kingdom was taken away from Saul.

It is interesting to see how men respond to power. Most are corrupted by it, they find their control over their followers to be intoxicating. But there are two ways to have followers; one can be a leader or a boss. Gideon was a leader; Saul tried to be a boss. There is one other character that I would like to introduce to see how power affected him, and that is Jesus Christ. We find that although as son of God and co-creator of the universe he had all of the power associated with that at his fingertips, he would not use it to make followers, but chose instead to lead. One of my favorite scriptures is Matthew 20.28, `the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.` Christ used his power gently, to heal and to lead. His great example of footwashing showed this service most dramatically. Though he was King and Master, he only wanted to serve. This kind of attitude should be firmly planted in us all. Truly, the first shall be last and the last first in the kingdom of heaven.