

Moses or Genghis Khan Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18

A few years ago a book entitled, *The Leadership Secrets of Genghis Khan* became quite popular. It extracted principles used by Genghis Khan that would lead to successful leadership - Here are just a few of those principles: **You only get one first impression * reward bravery and merit * If you lack a skill, consider an outside hire * Try to negotiate so everyone wins, but don't be afraid to drive a hard bargain.** GWE know Genghis Khan was successful. He was the founding Emperor or Khan of the Mongol Empire, which became the largest contiguous empire in history after his death. Even by the end of his life, the Empire covered most of Central Asia and China. His descendants extended it over all of modern-day China, Korea, the Caucasus, Central Asia, much of Eastern Europe, Russia, and Southwest Asia. Genghis Khan was also a business success, being credited with bringing the Silk Road under one political system which allowed communication and trade from Northeast Asia into Muslim Southwest Asia and Christian Europe.

Even his genes persist to today: National Geographic reported that "...geneticists have found that nearly 8 percent of the men living in the region of the former Mongol empire carry y-chromosomes that are nearly identical... That translates to roughly 16 million descendants." The article goes on to say that this is probably a direct result of Genghis Khan's genetic proliferation.

Genghis Khan was without questions a great political, military, economic, and genetic success, but here are the words I have left out about Genghis Khan: "His campaigns were often accompanied by wholesale massacres of the civilian populations... the invasions (led by his descendants) repeated the large-scale slaughters." The credit for the Silk Road is prefaced by "Although known for the brutality of his campaigns and considered by many to have been a genocidal ruler..." And I am sure much of the spread of his genetic material was done via forced actions.

Well certainly we wouldn't follow his lead in everything... but what about those leadership secrets? How do they reveal the man?

Reward Bravery and Merit After winning a battle, the Khan rounded up his surviving enemies and demanded to know who'd managed to shoot him. In a courageous move, Zurgadai admitted that he had, and Genghis Khan honored his honesty by letting him live and killing all his countrymen. Khan renamed him Jebe, which means "arrow." And Jebe went on to become one of his best generals emulating his leader well in cruelty.

If you lack a skill, consider an outside hire One of the difficulties faced by the Mongol army was walled cities. One way the Mongols overcame this disadvantage was by hiring (read: forcing) citizens from their previous conquests to do it for them. Sometimes this meant getting Chinese siege engineers to break the walls down. Sometimes this meant getting peasants to act as combination hostages/shock troops/human shields.

Try to negotiate so everyone wins, but don't be afraid to drive a hard bargain. When Genghis Khan arrived at a city he demanded surrender, and the city had a choice. If they surrendered immediately, everyone was allowed to live. If they waited until the next day, they would kill all the men, but the women and children were allowed to live. If they didn't surrender within two days, the Khan's troops would kill everyone, burn everything, and return later to kill anyone they'd missed. Genghis Khan was good to his word, whether that was "I will let you live" or "I will burn everything you've ever loved."

You Only Get One First Impression Some Turkish diplomats were sent to seek an audience with Genghis Khan. As they approached the city he'd most recently conquered, they found mountains of human bones, ground that was so covered in blood and dead flesh that their horses couldn't walk over it, and air so rancid that they could hardly breathe. Quite a first impression to give to a political envoy.

Why this long look at Genghis Khan? The publishing of a book lauding the leadership of this man, even with words from the author saying we would certainly not want to be like him, reveals a terrifying truth. Our culture seems only interested in the end success of the solitary conquering hero. That is who we lift up in our culture whether in business, sports, entertainment or politics. And even more troubling, we are perfect willing to forget about the cost of that individual success and the many people who may have to unwillingly pay that cost. How can we enshrine such a war criminal by writing a book lauding his leadership secrets? One thing I didn't tell you was he had his best friend killed, because of political expediency. Is this the kind of example we want to hold up. Is this what success really means?

To clarify true success, we turn our view to Moses, the Lawgiver. God tells the people they are “set apart” that is what being holy means. God is saying “as my people you will not view success the same way as the rest of the world.” And how does God say that will be accomplished? First, God says that all, especially the poor and the alien, will have food to eat. This is accomplished by leaving food for them in the fields at harvest time and allowing them to take it. Everyone has the basic need of food met. Second, God asks for truth. “You shall not lie to one another or swear falsely by my name.” This commandment addresses both personal communication and legal communication. and later “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people.” Truth and not tearing each other down with personal attacks.

Third, God says economic transactions will be just. “You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely - You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal (in case we missed it the first time); and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning.” The final commandment enables the worker to buy food for his family for that evening. And it does not give the hiring person any more power over the worker. And the last of the economic commandments: “you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord.” Next, God says the vulnerable and afflicted will be protected.

“You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling-block before the blind.” No cruelty to those who carry the burden of a disability. The Courts will treat all equally: “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.” And finally, love will be the guiding principle. “You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself.” (Suggesting we are to care for one another, even correcting one another so that we all can keep the commands - but always in love.) God goes on to say, “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”

Unlike the principles of that other man, Moses’ secret of leading a nation is to demand good, just, protective and loving care for all. Moses’ techniques are not about accomplishing one individual’s goals, but instead present a way to live so that all will succeed and be honored and protected. Our world has become star-struck at the expense of the many. We are hyper-focused on individual achievement and we don’t seem to care if someone’s rise is accomplished by unjust, bullying tactics that leave others in the dust. Are we truly only concerned with who is on top in this cosmic game of “King of the Mountain?”

Friends, we are called to be a holy people, set-apart and distinct from the dominant, dog-eat-dog world. Our actions, our talking points, even our definition of success must be rooted in the words of Moses and Jesus. The world is adrift; following the idol of individual achievement, a demon who rewards only a few and destroys many along the way. We must regain our sense of community and remember that we are connected. Our success as a people (whether a church, a city or a nation) is not determined by the accomplishments of one, but by the forming of a beloved community where all have enough, are safe and respected. A community where all know they will receive justice. A community where truth guides our communication and where love (not necessarily “like”) but love is the guiding principle for all. May it be so.

Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God.

You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord.

You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling-block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord.

You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

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