Why do most of us tend “not” to view ourselves as rulers?

We are not all designed to be leaders. We do not all have the spiritual gift of leadership and yet, as God’s “image” we are to be his representative rulers in this world. What do you think is the difference between being God’s representative ruler vs. being a gifted leader?

Leadership focuses on the specific role of leading other people to accomplish a task. Representative rule simply implies that we confidently represent God’s will, truth, love and power wherever we go. There are many different ways we can represent God’s rule through our lives. Team leadership may be one expression, but it is not the only way to rule.

Other than Jesus, who are some biblical characters that represented God’s rule well? What was it that made you think of them?

**Examples of various ways of representing God’s rule:**
- The blind man in how he stood up to the Pharisees (John 9)
- Moses as he stood before Pharaoh (Exodus 5-12)
- Esther as she risks her life for her people (Esther)
- The boy who surrenders his five loaves and two fish to Jesus (John 6)
- Stephen preaching to a hostile crowd (Acts 7)
- Dorcas who made clothes for and helped the poor (Acts 9)

To be a godly ruler in this world, what characteristics might you need?

**Two characteristics God emphasizes in scripture are to be “strong” and “courageous.”**
(Deuteronomy 31:6, 7, 23; Joshua 1:6, 7, 9, 18; 10:25; 1Chronicles 22:13; 28:20; 2Chronicles 32:7)

What does it mean to be “strong”?

Why would we need to be “courageous”?

Study the Joshua passage to better understand how to rule on behalf of God.
Joshua 1:1-11 (NIV)
After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide:
2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them--to the Israelites. 3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates--all the Hittite country--to the Great Sea on the west. 5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.
6 "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."
10 So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: 11 "Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.’"

What is the context of this passage and how does it impact what is written here?
Moses had just died and Joshua became responsible to lead the entire Israel nation into the Promised Land. The land ahead of them was full of fortified cities and powerful people (giants) and it was an intimidating endeavour ahead of them. The Israelites had come to this place before, but fear prevented them from entering the land. As a result, they were banished to wander in the wilderness for forty years until all those who rebelled had died.

The Israelites were a very fickle group of people, constantly rebelling against God and his appointed leadership. This led to many times when God would bring judgment against the Israelites in an attempt to turn their hearts back to him.

All this is to say, Joshua must have been a little intimidated by the responsibility placed into his hands.

What principle is God communicating to Joshua (and us) in the first paragraph?
Example: Give will give you success at whatever he calls you to do.

In the second paragraph, God tells Joshua to be “strong and courageous” three times. Whenever you see a repetition in scripture, stop to take notice of what is being emphasized.
There are three reasons why Joshua should be “strong and courageous”.
Find the principle behind each repetition.

1:6  
Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.

Principle: You will successfully accomplish what I command you to do.

How would this statement give confidence to Joshua to be strong and courageous?

How might this statement give confidence to us to rule on God’s behalf?

Are there any examples of a time when you were called by God to step out in faith and you simply had to trust he would give you success?

Are there times when God called you to do something but fears and insecurity held you back?

1:7  
Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Principle: Success is dependent upon staying true to God’s word.

How would following scripture help Joshua be prosperous and successful in leading the Israelites to claim the land?

The word “prosperous” in Hebrew (tsalach) means: to make progress, advance, succeed in your goals
Success ultimately comes from being aligned with God and his purposes. To follow the Law means that we are walking in relationship with God, as opposed to away from him in sinful rebellion. The Law showed the Israelites how to represent God’s design for life in contrast to the destructive approach of the pagan nations around them. To break away from God’s character and leading would be to miss the blessing he had prepared for them.

God’s laws work on the practical level. If the Israelites followed God’s laws then they would learn how to live at peace with God and each other. Every law given by God was an expression of love and righteousness that would give them wisdom to navigate every decision they would need to make. Being in sync with God and his mission opens the floodgates of blessing to be poured into our lives (blessing to accomplish his purposes with peace, joy and fruitfulness).

Success, for Joshua, meant keeping the Israelites focussed on God and their mission to take possession of the land and represent his rule.

How does the world define success today?

As you practically look at your own life, how have you been defining success?

What should be our definition of success?
Success for us today is still to accomplish the purposes God sets before us. Where worldly success focuses on building one’s own kingdom, Godly success focuses on faithfully doing whatever God calls us to do.

The mission he has given us as his church is to make disciples as we go through this world. Whatever “personal mission” God calls us to, it will reflect and help the church accomplish this greater mission in some way.

How does following God’s word today pave the way for our success?
If success means accomplishing God’s purposes, then we can only do that by embracing God’s character and leading. Remember, our primary purpose is to be in relationship with God and then to represent him to the world. If we are not abiding by God’s word then we are neither embracing him nor representing his purposes to the world.

If following God’s word is a key to being successful and prosperous, why do we spend such little time studying it? Why do you think we are content to simply do a little “devotional” reading, but not spend time deeply probing scripture?
1:9  

*Be strong and courageous.* Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

**Principle:** God is with you every step of the way; there is nothing to fear.

How might these words of encouragement have stripped fear and terror away from Joshua?

*Romans 8:31 (NIV)*

*If God is for us, who can be against us?*

If this is true, why do we still limit our lives with fear and personal insecurity?

If this is true, why do we get discouraged in ministry?

At times in ministry when people don’t seem to be supporting us, things seem to be a challenge and we are seeing little fruit, how can this passage encourage us?

Sometimes it is easy to lose perspective as to WHY we do ministry?  
Give an example of some times when you have lost sight of why you serve in the way that you do?

In those times what became your focus?

How would God want us to shift our focus during those times?
Why does God call Joshua to “strong and courageous” three times, and then a fourth through the people in Joshua 1:18?

*Joshua 1:16-18 (NIV)*

> Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!"

Joshua had an impossible challenge ahead of him that could only be accomplished through the mighty work of God. Joshua could never succeed in the task set before him unless he found his strength and courage in the Lord. If Joshua took his eyes off God, then he would quickly be overwhelmed by the responsibility.

The people affirmed that the task could only be accomplished through the strength and courage made possible through the presence of God himself in their midst.

**What can this teach us about the stresses we face in our daily lives?**

If we rely on our strength and ability to accomplish tasks set before us we will become full of fear resulting in stress and anxiety. By focusing our eyes on God and his Word, we will accomplish everything he calls us to accomplish in our mission and daily work.

A clear perspective of God’s presence and power will drive fear and insecurity away from us, freeing us to make right decisions and accomplish that which would be impossible without God.

**Do you think our church is characterized by people who are “strong and courageous”? Why or why not?**

**How can we cultivate this perspective in our lives and in our church?**
Zechariah 4:6 (NIV)
“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty.

What are the implications of this passage?
Our success is not dependent on our ability but on the power of God. Our responsibility is to be faithful and obedient, leaving the results to him.

If God is the one who creates the results anyway, why does he call us to rule?
God invites us to partner with him in his act of ruling. He is still the “ruler” but he gives us the privilege of representing his rule to the rest of creation. In this way we are included into the divine activity of the godhead; we are raised above the rest of creation to be its caretakers.

What room will there be for timidity and insecurity in the kingdom of God? What do these traits indicate about our belief in God?
These traits imply that we do not believe God is in control and working through us. As a result, we fear failure and the opinions of others. We then shy away from the incredible joy God sets before us to rule with him; we shy away and fail to accomplish the great things God has in store for us. When we fail to rule God’s character and purposes are not represented to the rest of creation and we stay trapped in feelings of inadequacy and insignificance.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)
But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

How might this passage change our perspective about what ministry challenges we may accept or reject?
If God is clearly calling me to a ministry, my ability has nothing to do with whether I obey or not. God may call someone to a task specifically because they are not capable in and of themselves. (i.e.: God reducing the size of Gideon’s army so that he alone would get the glory – Judges 7)

Why would Paul boast in his weaknesses?
Weakness is an opportunity for God to reveal his presence and power through us. When great things are accomplished through states of weakness it becomes obvious that God is at work accomplishing his purposes through us.

Have there been times when you attempted ministry in your own strength and confidence, yet it seemed to bear little fruit?
Has there been a time when Christ accomplished something through you when you were weak to the task?

How might acknowledging your weakness actually make you more effective in ministry?

GOD SAYS: BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

Is there something you have been putting off but now know you need to do because God is with you and has called you to the task?

If you embrace these words fully, how might it change your week?

Is there a way you can serve others this week that may require a step of faith?