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UP THE DOWN PATH: P

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God as Ruler of His People

In the shadow of his successful defense against the threat of the Midianite army, the elders of Israel tempted Gideon to walk up the down path. The book of Judges records the event in this way:

Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hands of the Midianites." Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you." (Judg. 8:22-23, NASB)

Gideon's response is a rare glimpse into the character of a man who was not motivated by the promise of position or power. It also r

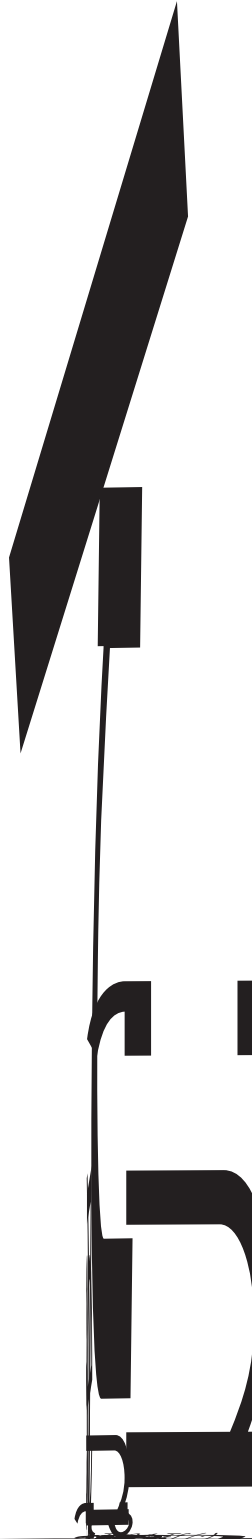
assumption of an attitude of self-ascendancy that ultimately led to his rejection as king of Israel (1 Sam. 13:10-14; 1 Chron. 10:13-14). God's prediction to Samuel of the king's dominance over those served (1 Sam. 8:11-18) was quickly and consistently realized throughout the rest of Israel's history under the kings.

The tendenc

the standard for the church, such an assertion would carry the danger that we might assume incarnational behavior only toward fellow believers. Incarnational behavior, or walking down the down path, is our testimony of Christlikeness to the world. How we lead our families, our communities, our businesses, and work environments is the test that determines whether we are climbing the ladder of ascendancy to dominate or descending the path to serve. Our behavior toward others marks our leadership orientation—are we about service or control?

Descending to Serve

Notice how frequently Jesus' posture of service includes the element of descent: He sat down and taught them (John 8:2); He leaned down and healed them (Matt. 15:30); He leaned down to place His healing hand upon the little girl (Mark 5:32); He came down and healed (Luke 6:17); He cast forth the demon from the child at His feet (Luke 9:42); Zacchaeus was



approached His death willingly. The lifting up of the cr

people will be found who are better of