

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant Leadership: Where the leadership focus is on the well-being and development of others to achieve their potential while fulfilling the commission of Christ to build His Church. Such individuals are servants who lead rather than leaders who serve. The difference is seen in a mindset that seeks to lift up others rather than themselves. The primary characteristic of servant leaders is humility and the primary giftedness is that of shepherding.

Characteristics of a Servant Leader

1. A Servant Attitude (Obedient to Christ)

- Jesus set the example of obedience
 - John 6:38 Jesus came to do the Father's will, not his own
 - Heb 5:8 Jesus learned obedience through suffering
 - John 17:4 Jesus finished the work given him by the Father
- The obedience of a leader
 - **Read John 13:12-16**
*Why would a servant act greater than his master?
 Explain the point that Jesus was making*
 - **Read Luke 17:7-10**
*What reward do you expect for doing what you are instructed?
 What attitude is missing when we do only what is required?*
 - **Read Heb 12:2** *What was the motivation behind the obedience of Jesus? Explain*

2. A Servant Attitude (Serving Others)

- Jesus set the example of servanthood
 - Matt 20:28 Jesus came to give his life for others
 - John 13:4-15 Jesus demonstrated servanthood by washing the disciples feet
 - Rom 15:1-3 Jesus sought to please others, not himself
 - 2Cor 8:9 Jesus became poor so that we could become rich
- A servant leader puts others first
 - **Read Matt 11:28-30** *What principles of leadership does Jesus demonstrate?
 How do you measure up to those leadership principles?*
 - **Read 1Thes 2:1-12** *Describe Paul's leadership of the Thessalonian people
 How is leadership like parenthood? What is the focus of a parent?*

3. Not self seeking

- Servant leaders doesn't promote themselves
 - Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted (*Matt 23:12; Lk 14:11*)
 - Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled (*Matt 23:12; Lk 14:11*)
*Describe an experience where you were humbled by exalting yourself
 Describe other possible consequences of promoting self (see Matt 20:20-24)*

- Servant leaders develop other leaders
 - **Read 2Tim 2:2** *What are you doing to develop & promote other leaders?
What steps will you take to make this a part of your life?*
4. Not self important
- A servant leader doesn't seek authority, prominence or a title of importance
 - **Read Matt 20:25-28** *Do you wish to be great or to be a servant?
What does a great leader look like?
Is it appropriate to seek authority? Why or why not?*
 - **Read Luke 14:7-10** *Do you enjoy recognition & prominence as a leader?
Do you seek recognition from God or from men?*
 - A servant leader works well with others
 - **Read Eph 4:1-3** *How would you handle disagreements based on this passage?
How should you receive the ideas & opinions of others?
Do you actively solicit the ideas and feedback of others?
How important is a culture of love and trust among leadership?
Are you willing to trust the leadership of others?*
5. Willing to suffer & sacrifice
- Example of Jesus
 - Jesus came to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (*Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45*)
 - Jesus was willing to suffer on our behalf (*1Pet 2:21*)
 - Our Sacrifice
 - **Read 1John 3:16** *What evidence is there that you demonstrate sacrificial love?
How far would you go in serving others?
How would servant leadership affect your lifestyle?*

APPENDIX

1. A Servant Attitude (Obedient to Christ)

- **Read John 13:12-16**

Why would a servant act greater than his master?

Explain the point that Jesus was making

Although Jesus was God, He humbled himself to wash the feet of the disciples. It was not beneath Him to take on the role of a servant. If the master can humble himself as a servant certainly the servant must humble himself as well. Jesus was teaching by example that their role, and that of all leaders, is that of a servant. Those who are proud would not humble themselves as Jesus did and thus act greater than He did. We serve for the benefit of others.

- **Read Luke 17:7-10**

What reward do you expect for doing what you are instructed?

What attitude is missing when we do only what is required?

The focus of the parable is on the attitude of the slave and the corresponding response from the master. Notice that the slave does exactly what his master has instructed him to do; no less but also no more. The attitude of the slave is to do only what he is required to do having no particular desire to please his master. Consequently, no thanks are offered. As God's children we desire to do God's will not because we are ordered to do so, but out of a spirit of love and gratitude. For that there will be a reward.

- **Read Heb 12:2**

What was the motivation behind the obedience of Jesus? Explain

The cross and all that Jesus was facing was disregarded in the light of the joy that Jesus anticipated; the knowledge that His obedience to the Father's will would result in the triumph of God's plan for mankind and the knowledge of His being glorified and exalted, sitting at His Father's side ([John 17:5](#)). Jesus may also have been thinking of the shared joy with those who would believe in Him ([John 15:11](#)).

2. A Servant Attitude (Serving Others)

- **Read Matt 11:28-30**

What principles of leadership does Jesus demonstrate?

How do you measure up to those leadership principles?

- Provide teaching
- Be compassionate, gentle and humble
- Give assurance and hope
- Provide clear and simple boundaries/rules

- **Read 1Thes 2:1-12**

Describe Paul's leadership of the Thessalonian people

Paul came as a humble servant to speak, exhort and encourage in a manner pleasing to God to whom he was accountable but not seeking approval or glory from men. He did not assert authority but built strong, affectionate relationships investing his very life. He even worked hard on the side to support himself so as not to be a burden to them. Overall he was devout, upright and blameless.

How is leadership like parenthood? What is the focus of a parent?

Parents sacrificially seek to help their children to grow into mature adults that are pleasing to the Lord. This is basically the same role of a spiritual leader. Their concern is not for themselves but for those they are accountable for. Paul said he acted as a nursing mother caring for her child and as a father imploring his children to walk worthy of God. Clearly he spoke of a deep bond between himself and the Thessalonians.

3. Not self seeking

- Servant leaders doesn't promote themselves

Describe an experience where you were humbled by exalting yourself

Describe other possible consequences of promoting self (see Matt 20:20-24)

Others may not take you seriously or may treat you with contempt or condemnation if you promote self. You will likely lose followers and find that others don't want to help you. You may end up embarrassed, alone, and without future opportunities. In the end you will have to answer to God. Instead, your role is to promote others; their growth and well-being.

4. Not self important

A servant leader doesn't seek authority, prominence or a title of importance

- **Read Matt 20:25-28**

Do you wish to be great or to be a servant?

What does a great leader look like?

Is it appropriate to seek authority? Why or why not?

The passage describes great men among the Gentile rulers as those exercising authority in a highly tyrannical way. Jesus describes greatness in terms of servanthood and gave Himself as an example of ultimate servanthood. Greatness as a position of authority or greatness as a servant. That is the real question and Jesus gave the disciples a challenge to choose servanthood. Seeking authority for the sake of having authority is inconsistent with what Jesus was teaching. Seeking a position of authority in order to serve does seem consistent but caution is necessary in that authority can go to ones head.

- **Read Luke 14:7-10**

Do you enjoy recognition & prominence as a leader?

Do you seek recognition from God or from men?

Recognition and prominence can inflate our ego if we aren't careful. A sign that there is a problem would be the enjoyment of our prominence and the recognition that comes with it. If we don't humble ourselves it will be done for us. Instead we should seek recognition from God with whom we must give an account.

A servant leader works well with others

- **Read Eph 4:1-3**

How would you handle disagreements based on this passage?

How should you receive the ideas & opinions of others?

Do you actively solicit the ideas and feedback of others?

The relationship is more important than being right. We are taught here that humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance will help maintain unity and peace. Ideas and opinions of others should be sought in order to gain a broader perspective. Disagreements can arise not only on facts but on preexisting opinions and experience that make discussion seem disconnected and can only be resolved by exploring the reasons for those opinions.

How important is a culture of love and trust among leadership?

Are you willing to trust the leadership of others?

Relationships among leaders based on love and trust allows them to disagree without heat or animosity. Strong relationships remove any concern about motives or hidden agendas because you know their strengths, weaknesses, and their passions. You know who they are.