

1. What Is A Servant Who Leads?

In Mark 10:42-45, we read, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” In these verses, we see that Christ reverses the order of leadership from that of the world. Christ said that the one who wants to become great becomes a servant. The one who desires to be first becomes the slave of all. That will be the focus of our topic today.

The word that is translated “servant” is the Greek word “diakonos”. It speaks of one who carries out the commands of another. It spoke of one who was doing service. In the New Testament, the word is used in a variety of ways. The most common uses for Christians deal with our service for Christ and our service to one another - both physical service and service through preaching and teaching. This word views a servant in relationship to his work.

The word that is translated “slave” or “bondslave” is the Greek word “doulos”. In the Greek society, a slave had no rights. Christ used this word to speak of one who gives himself to another's will. It speaks of one who is so devoted to another that he disregards his own interests. Christ used it to speak of those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among men. Christ became the perfect example of the meaning of the word when He came to serve and give His life a ransom for many. This word views a servant in relationship to his master.

In these verses, we see that godly leadership avoids certain things and includes certain things. We see that:

- ◆ Godly leadership does not include lording it over others
- ◆ Godly leadership does not include exercising authority over others
- ◆ Godly leadership does include serving other Christians
- ◆ Godly leadership does include becoming a bondslave to Christ by carrying out His ministry to all

First, we see that a servant who leads is not one who lords it over others. The word that is translated “lord” speaks of one who brings others under his or her power and control. In the world, people love to control others. However, we see that godly leadership avoids trying to control others or bring others under their power. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus of the danger of such leaders in Acts 20:30, “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” This verse shows us that leaders who try to control are actually trying to draw away people after themselves rather than teach them to follow the Lord.

John warned of such leaders when he talked about domineering Diotrephes the dictator, in 3 John 9-10, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and

forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.” Diotrephes was so eager to have control that he did several things. He:

- Spoke evil of those who did not agree with him
- He refused to accept those who did not agree with him
- He forbid everyone else to accept those who did not agree with him
- He put people out of the church who accepted those who did not agree with him

Peter explained what we are to do instead of trying to lead by controlling others in 1 Peter 5:3, “Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” We are to lead, by example, those who are entrusted to us. This means that a key way a servant leader leads is to lead by example. Paul, Silas, and Timothy said, in 1 Thessalonians 2:10, “You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe.” In this verse, we see that these men provided an example of godly character to show Christians how to walk. The opposite of lording it over others is providing an example of godly character for others to choose to follow.

Second, we see that godly leadership does not include exercising authority over others. In Matthew 28:19, we see that all authority has been given to Christ both in heaven and in earth. In Philippians 2:5-11, we see that Christ humbled himself by becoming a man. Then, He humbled himself even further by becoming obedient to death on the cross. The word that is used, in Mark 10:42, shows that leaders in the world want to exercise power over others and tell them what to do. Since we are to follow the example of Christ, instead of telling others what we to do, we are to show them by a humble example.

Christ showed the disciples the perfect example of humble service when He washed their feet the night before He was crucified, in John 13:2-17. In John 13:13-17, Christ said, “‘You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.’” In these verses, we see that:

- Christ is the One who is Lord
- Christ gave us an example to follow
- Christ said we are to do as He did
- Christ said we are not to exercise greater authority than He had just exercised
- Christ said we will be blessed if we lead by humble service

Third, we see that godly leadership does include serving other Christians. Part of our inheritance from Adam, that controls every person before he or she becomes a Christian, is the fact that every person is motivated by separation from God, fear, guilt, shame, and blame – Genesis 3:7-13. We serve Christians by helping them learn to move from:

- separation from God to relationship and fellowship with God and with other Christians – Romans 8:14-17; 1 John 1:3-7
- fear to love – 1 John 4:18

- guilt to forgiveness, cleansing and forgiving others – Acts 26:18; 1 John 1:9; Ephesians 4:32
- shame to acting as new creations in Christ – 2 Corinthians 5:17
- blame to taking responsibility for our choices and actions and learning to act in the power of the Holy Spirit– Galatians 5:13; Romans 6:13-16; Luke 24:49

We serve other Christians by helping them to discover their choices and consequences and then encouraging them to pray that the Lord will lead them to make wise choices. We also serve other Christians by equipping them for the work of the ministry – Ephesians 4:11-13.

Fourth, we see that godly leadership does involve becoming a bonds slave to Christ. Paul begins the book of Titus by calling himself a bondservant of Jesus Christ. He begins the book of Philemon by calling himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus. In Philemon 8, we see that because Paul was an apostle he had the authority to command Philemon. However, in verse nine we read that, “yet for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Because Paul viewed himself as a bonds slave of Christ, he chose to appeal to Philemon. In the same way, a servant who leads is one who appeals to other Christians in love, rather than giving them commands to obey.

As bonds slaves of Christ, we are to be obedient to Christ and obey His commands. A servant who leads:

- ♦ teaches other Christians the commandments of Christ
- ♦ provides other Christians an example of how to obey the commands of Christ
- ♦ serves other Christians by helping them reverse the effects of original sin
- ♦ serves other Christians by equipping them for the work of the ministry and
- ♦ serves other Christians by appealing to them in love

May the Lord richly bless you, as you are becoming a servant who leads.