

13. A Servant Who Leads Demonstrates Servant Leadership

In Mark 10:35-40, James and John asked Christ to have the privilege of sitting on His right and left hand in the kingdom. Matthew 20:20-28 adds the fact that they actually had their mother make the request, as they thought that might help them get these positions of authority and power. Mark 10:41 and Matthew 20:24 tell us the response of the other ten, “And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.” This would indicate that the other ten had the same goal, but felt that James and John were trying to get these positions by asking first.

Christ used this opportunity to explain the nature of true spiritual leadership. First, Christ began by describing the leadership pattern of the world. Mark 10:42 says, “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.’” The goal of every person who depends on self is to exercise control, power, and authority over others. This is so that they can get what they want in life. People, who depend on self, have a very difficult time seeing things from the viewpoint of others.

Christ said that true spiritual leadership is just the opposite of worldly leadership. Mark 10:43 tells us, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.” The word that is translated “servant” means, *one who carries out the commands of another*. Here, we see that if we have a desire to be great, we will only become great as we carry out the commands of the Lord. As Christ said to the Father when He prayed in Gethsemane, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.” Christ was concerned about carrying out the will of the Father.

Christ went on to say, in Mark 10:44, “And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.” The word that is translated “slave” means, *one who is devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests*. This kind of leadership requires that we take time to see things from the viewpoint of others, not our own viewpoint. It requires really listening to others so that we hear what they are really saying. Then, it involves taking action to do what is best for others, even when that is not what is best for yourself.

Christ completed His explanation of spiritual leadership in Mark 10:45. That verse tells us, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The word that is translated “ransom” means, *to liberate many from misery and the penalty of their sins*. The word that is translated “serve” twice in this verse is the same root word as the word translated “servant” in verse 43. The word “serve” means, *to attend to anything, that may serve another’s interests*.

We could compare worldly and spiritual leadership to a pyramid. In the world, people want to be at the top of the pyramid where everyone meets their needs. In contrast, Christ said that He came to serve the needs of the entire world. Christ did this by giving Himself as a ransom to liberate many from the misery and penalty of their sins. He calls us to follow His example and serve the needs of the world by liberating many from the misery and penalty of their sins. He also calls us

to help others reach their full potential in Christ.

That means that the focus of our life and ministry is to be a servant of Christ who carries out His commands and follows His example. That means that our great concern will be the best interests of others. The best interests of others include helping others to experience forgiveness of sins. Also included in the best interests, of those who become Christians, is helping them reach the full potential Christ has for them. We might put it this way:

- * if we drive people, they will serve us until they can get out of our way
- * if we lead people, we can lead them as far as we have gone
- * if we serve people, we can help them reach their full potential in Christ

Paul demonstrated five ways that he served others and helped them reach their full potential in Christ, by his prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. In that prayer he prayed that:

- ♦ they would be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man
- ♦ they would be rooted and grounded in love
- ♦ They would be able to comprehend the four dimensions of Christ's love
- ♦ They would know the love of Christ which passes knowledge
- ♦ They would be filled with all the fullness of God

Paul concludes that prayer, in Ephesians 3:20-21, by telling what can happen as we serve people and help them reach their full potential. Those verses say, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Going back to our pyramid, according to Ephesians 2:20, Christ is the chief cornerstone and provides the foundation on which all others can have spiritual life. Ephesians 2:20 says that the apostles provide the next level of the foundation because the apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection and the prophets gave us the written Word of God. True spiritual life must be based on the resurrection of Christ and the instruction of the Word of God. If we are Christian leaders, we are to serve other Christian leaders, other Christians and non-Christians so that they can be liberated from the misery and penalty of their sins.

Christian leaders serve other Christian leaders by strengthening them in their ministry. They serve others Christians by helping them grow. They serve non-Christians by sharing the Gospel with them, so they can receive forgiveness of sins. Christians serve other Christians, by helping them grow, and non-Christians, by sharing the Gospel with them. At every level, we are to be concerned about the best interests of others, not our own interests.

In John 21:15-17, Christ said we lead by loving Him. Those verses say, "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.'

Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” These verses tell us that effective godly leadership is not based on natural leadership skills, programs, methods, or anything else. Effective godly leadership is based on loving Christ. We also see that effective godly leadership:

- focuses on feeding young Christians
- focuses on providing shepherding ministries
- focuses on feeding maturing Christians

Two passages that give us help on providing effective shepherding ministries are Isaiah 40:11 and Ezekiel 34:1-16, where God talks about the failure of Israel’s shepherds and tells how He will lead the sheep. In those verses, we see that:

- ♦ an effective shepherd feeds the flock
- ♦ an effective shepherd provides protection to young Christians
- ♦ an effective shepherd gently leads Christians who are leading others
- ♦ an effective shepherd will feed Christians from the Word of God
- ♦ an effective shepherd strengthens the diseased (those affected by false teaching)
- ♦ an effective shepherd strengthens the sick (those affected by sinful living)
- ♦ an effective shepherd helps the sheep lie in a good fold (fellowship)
- ♦ an effective shepherd brings back those who have been driven away
- ♦ an effective shepherd binds up the broken
- ♦ an effective shepherd seeks the lost

In Galatians 5:13, Christ calls us to serve one another in love. That verse says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” In this verse, we see three key things:

- Christians have been called to liberty
- Christians are not to use that liberty to satisfy the flesh
- Christians are to use that liberty to serve one another in love

We see the basic attitudes necessary for effective servant leadership in Philippians 2:3-4. Those verses tell us, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” If we want to be effective servant leaders, we will have the following attitudes:

- we will do nothing out of strife (putting self forward)
- we will do nothing out of conceit or vainglory (pride)
- we will have a humble opinion of ourselves
- we will consider others better than ourselves
- we will not look out for our own best interests
- we will look out for the best interests of others

Finally, we see the basic actions for effective servant leadership in 1 Peter 4:10-11. Those verses tell us, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus

Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” In these verses, we see that we are to have two basic actions for effective servant leadership:

- when we speak, we are to speak the Word of God
- as we serve, we are to serve with the ability God gives

God has called us to be a servant who leads by demonstrating servant leadership. This means that we have to give our desire for power and control to Christ and become His servant and follow His example. We will help others reach their full potential, in Christ, as we serve them. May the Lord richly bless you, as you provide an example of godly servant leadership, by your example, and serve others, so they can reach their full potential in Christ.