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## The Character of Servant Leadership

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*The Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development* [www.churchleadership.org](http://www.churchleadership.org)

**Servant Leadership** is exercising real, godly leadership, as Christ did when He used a towel, and influencing, equipping, and empowering people to accomplish God's purpose and plan. It is serving others unselfishly while influencing and empowering them to grow in a Christ-directed, purposeful direction. This was an uncommon trait in Jesus' time, just as it is in ours; do not let it be uncommon for you! Being a leader in the church, or in the home, is never a force of personality; it is earning that respect because you love and care (1 Kings 3:9; Luke 22:25-28; Matthew 25:21; Mark 9:33-37; John 5:19; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 2:24; Hebrews 13:17)

**Is the Character of Servant Leadership working in you?** Here is how you can find out.

Take a careful look at this character, this Fruit of Servant Leadership from God's most precious Word, by examining the passages below. Now ask yourself:

1. How do I exhibit Servant Leadership in my daily life?
  2. What can I do to develop a better willingness to have a serving attitude in leadership and value people rather than manipulate them?
  3. What blocks Servant Leadership from working and being exhibited in me?
  4. How can I make Servant Leadership function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainly and stress?
- Here are positive examples from Scripture (John 13:1-17; Acts 13:1-5; 1 Corinthians 16:15-18)
  - Here are negative examples from Scripture (Genesis 30:25-43; Judges 13-16; Ezra 4:8-23; Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 22:24)

**Manipulation, Political Self-Centered Agendas, and Exploitation**, are all opposites. These types of leadership models may be the common approach—so it seems—but they will fragment, and even destroy a church. The leadership for the church must come from the Jesus model, not the business model! Rotten leadership is more destructive than a legion of demons, as it corrupts godly principles and displays a skewed understanding of our call to follow Christ. It seeks its own, and not the Word.

Jesus clearly tells us that a leader should behave like a servant (Luke 22:26). We are not in leadership for power, control, or for personal gain. Rather, we are to point others in His direction by our example. Jesus took a towel and washed His disciple's feet. This is an act we can easily glance over, missing its significance. But this was God, Creator of the universe, performing the lowest job in that culture—washing someone's feet. If the President of the United States came over to clean your toilet, it would be a pale comparison! This is an example for us—we are never too high in our position to perform the lowest tasks, because, it is not the task—it is our servant attitude that is important.

Samson was a Judge for Israel (Judges 13-16). His primary responsibility was to lead his people, and defeat the Philistines. He chose, instead, to party and pursue women that were not right for him. The end result was that his strength was taken away; he was blinded and powerless. Only at the literal end of His life did he call upon God. He wasted his leadership and abilities on foolish, meaningless gains and manipulation. How sad that so many of our church leaders do the same. We are given precious opportunities and we squander them, pursuing trends, personal needs, and desires—and not God's Will!

Real Biblical leadership for the church is never a force of Will or personality. Leadership embodies the fruit and character of our Lord. It requires being a servant before you attempt to direct

others. If a leader just directs and never serves, there is a good chance he is not a real leader; rather, he is a pretender, exercising his agenda—not God’s call and Will.

**Servant Leadership Principles:** (Romans 12; Galatians 2:20-21; Philippians 2-3)

- Someone who has the attitudes that Jesus had!
- Someone who has been transformed by Christ, with faith as the core of being, fuelled by Christ, not self!
- Someone who places other’s needs first!
- Someone who has eternal values and God's timing in mind!
- Someone who places integrity ahead of ambition! (I Tim. 3:2a & 7a)
- Someone who sees glorifying Christ and serving Him as the measure of success!

**More Ideas for Being a Servant Leader:**

- Servant Leaders of Jesus Christ and His church have His “basin and towel” attitude! (John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 9:26,27)
- Servant Leaders do not neglect their family!
- Servant Leaders are not weak--they are meek (strength under control)! Be willing to challenge the system, ask questions, take risks, and, when necessary, be willing to change. (See the articles in *The Leadership Challenge*)
- Christian leaders and followers must not allow personal agendas or power issues get in the way of God’s Word or of reaching the goal of the church (if the goal is Biblical).
- Servant Leaders think strategically, like a quarterback does in football. They see the big picture, what is needed to run plays, see possible options and defenses needed in order to better glorify our Lord in life, programs, and church.
- Servant Leaders know how to lead themselves and others in order to bring the church deeper into the heart of God so to worship and glorify Him!
- Servant Leaders are not willing to compromise truth or the Word just to be more effective!
- Servant Leaders should be able, while modeling the way, to get others to follow, empowering them to grow spiritually and in ministry.
- Servant Leaders include the team in all major decisions and strategic planning for the ministry.
- Servant Leaders remember Barnabus and his relationship to the disciple, Paul. The early church leadership, a model in which we need to apply too, linked them to each other.
- Servant Leaders work within their call, gifts, and Scripture. They are open and motivated by the Holy Spirit, which is not just a *charismatic* thing! (2 Tim 1:6,7)
- Servant Leadership is a team approach! The teammates know that working together is giving without receiving, as well as personally and corporately growing spiritually!
- Servant Leaders do not forget to support the church’s overall vision and purpose statement, or place personal feelings higher or in place of it. Each team and Servant Leader is a working part amongst the other parts. Just as a car cannot go anywhere with just an engine, each team and leader contribute to the overall mission and purpose of the church.
- Servant Leaders know that loyalty, harmony, unity, trust, and commitment come from a collaboratively encouraging environment.
- Servant Leaders listen to everyone, not just the ones in power or ones who have the influence!
- Servant Leaders are extremely important! Next to the pastoral staff and board, the servant leaders set the tone for the church. Servant Leaders know that the effectiveness of their empowerment, training, and supervising of the team will determine the effectiveness of the ministry and church.

- Servant Leaders can and should expect that Satan will not be happy with them, and must be aware of his various ways of distraction and confusion, especially when success comes which infringes on his ground. The church is Satan's ground all too often!!
- Servant Leaders will resist the latest fads and leadership trends that are unbiblical! Yet, they will use ones to make them more effective that are in character of our Lord! Examples might be budgeting and time management.

These principles will take time to learn, as they cut across what we may have learned in seminary, at conferences, or from high priced consultants. Nevertheless, we are called to run a church this way, His way. We can learn it and implement it!

### **Servant Leadership checklist:**

1. Do you follow the above servant leadership principles?
2. Do you have clear goals and a Biblical purpose?
3. Do you have a method to monitor performance of people without being condescending?
4. Do your goals include the spiritual growth of yourself and the team?
5. Do you have clear job descriptions and line of command?
6. Do you spend the time to encourage your team on to spiritual growth?
7. Do you know how to lead yourself and others to bring the church deeper into the heart of God to worship and glorify Him?
8. Do your team members possess the competence, abilities, and skills to carry out these goals?
9. Do your team members have a deep reverence and love for the Lord, so it infuses them and their personality, and spills out to others around them? (Keep in mind the different personalities and spiritual maturity of team members.)
10. Do the goals of the ministry take a back seat to service, love, and care?
11. Do you have a personal agenda that occupies your primary focus?
12. Do you have a sense of unified commitment within your team so that they feel a sharing of the ministry, or is there just one person running the show?
13. Is there a sense of love and trust within the team?
14. Do you hold regular meetings, listen, and welcome their input?
15. Does your team trust you and know that you care and listen so that they share their perceptions and give you feedback?
16. Do you encourage improvement without imposing pressure?
17. Does your team have the necessary resources, supplies, and support needed to get the work done?
18. Does your team feel appreciated?
19. Do you build on one another's strengths as well as protect and compliment one another's weaknesses?
20. Do you allow your team the freedom to fail without judging or showing condescension?
21. Does your team support you and help you achieve goals, or is there competition and back fighting?
22. Do you have the ability to confront sin and take risks, setting the example for the team?
23. Do you listen to new ideas from your team?
24. Do the church and upper leadership, including the pastor(s), support you and your team?
25. Have you spent adequate time with training?
26. Are you open for improvement?
27. How much time are you and your team spending in prayer, personally as well as collectively? If prayer is not occupying at least 1/3 of your meeting times, your priorities are off!

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