



Exemplary (Servant) Leadership

There are many ways of approaching the theme of Exemplary servant oriented leadership, but what I will share with you today is what the Lord put on my heart for you.

I've been talking about the motives & attitudes of the leader and purposely not the mechanics of how it works out in the Church.

While many think of leadership as their opportunity to build their empire, promote their ministry, finally be able to tell people what they can and can't do, Jesus' concept of leadership is that we are called to serve the whole world, and be examples of caring servanthood leadership. Attitude and motivation is very important!

But, and this is very important, make no mistake about it, Jesus has called for, is creating, is ordaining, and is commissioning leaders in the body of Christ. The body of Christ is never to lack leadership. It is true that our leadership strength is not to be based in our titles or our positions, but there is true leadership and authority. Those who don't want there to be any leaders will have to take it up with Jesus, because He is the one who invented the whole idea. Leaders are good things. It's just that wrong forms, attitudes, and motivations of leadership are not good.

Today we will look at good leadership. We will see that God raises leaders who lead by example, who lead with care, compassion, and gentleness, who lead by revelation and under an anointing, but they do lead. True authority exists, and it does flow through leaders, but the attitude and the approach of that authority is just as important as exercising that leadership.

For those who think that a Church, that has buildings, budgets, and financial obligations, shouldn't have leaders, and positions, and titles, they need to recognize that it is impossible to lead without designated leaders. Once a group moves beyond around 30 people, consensus government is very unlikely to work. Why, because in the New Testament we only see one example of Consensus leadership in a large gathering, and it is Acts 15. The reason it worked there was because everyone at that meeting was fully committed to the leading of the Holy Spirit, as Church leaders, and were in full agreement that what they were wanting to find out was what Jesus wanted done about the issue they were facing. The logistics of consensus government working in the average Church of 30 and above are such that it will always bog down, end up in huge controversies, and will cause great strife, simply because in the general body of Christ a deep commitment to Christ and prayer is more unusual than usual. Consensus only works where every last person is able to hear the voice of Christ, is fully committed to hearing it, and consistently hears it. This is simply not the case in the average Church. We may wish it was, but it isn't, therefore, in the average Church there will be Sr Pastors and Elders whom we have decided are uniquely trustworthy to have heard from God and to declare to us His will for the governance of His Church. God does work through leaders.

It is not wrong, in the form of government we are all used to in Church, for Sr Pastors to develop job descriptions, set agendas, require certain time management responsibilities, etc. They have a legitimate CEO function. I'm not saying these functions are inappropriate. I just believe there is to be a right attitude that attends these roles. I'm speaking to attitudes much more than specific functions.

Jesus' style of leadership however is one that creates a sense of equality, and if any other sense is created it is that the leader is beneath his follower (at least in attitude) as one called to humble himself and serve the followers' needs. Jesus' servant love and the power of His anointing created His following. He never resorted to demanding obedience of His followers to Him. He spoke of the importance of their obedience, but He never directly commanded them to obey Him. But, He wasn't overseeing a building with a budget, a staff, and a debt. If He had then He would have used corporation principles of leadership too. In His case He functioned on a purely spiritual level because as yet there were none of the other issues that currently attend Church. Business elements utilize one dimension of authority in our Churches, and spiritual guidance utilizes another. When we keep these distinctions clear then Church can be a relatively peaceful place.

Listen to Him in John 13, where He washes His disciples feet and forever blows away their concept of leadership as being ones to be served.

John 13:13 (NKJV)

"You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have **washed your feet**, you also ought to **wash one another's feet**. 15 "For I have given you **an example**, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 "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. 17 "If you know these things, **blessed are you if you do them**.

It is the job of every leader to so manifest and create this impression in the lives of those he leads that they are convinced that he really believes Jesus' words apply to him.

Lord John Edward Emerich Acton was one of the most important British historians of the early 20th century and was quoted as saying "*Power tends to corrupt; absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely*"

Obviously, by the following passage, Jesus would have agreed with Mr. Acton.

Matthew 20:20-28 (NKJV)

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. 21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." 22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." 23 So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." 24 And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. 25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that **the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over (Katakuriouo) them**, and **those who are great exercise authority over them**. 26 **Yet it shall not be so among you**; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your **servant**. 27 "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your **slave**—28 "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Mark 10:35-45 (NKJV)

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." 36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 37 They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." 38

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"³⁹ They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized;⁴⁰ but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.⁴² But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that **those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over (Katakuriouo) them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.**⁴³ **Yet it shall not be so among you;** but whoever desires to become great among you **shall be your servant.**⁴⁴ "And whoever of you desires to be first **shall be slave of all.**⁴⁵ "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but **to serve**, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Luke 22:24-27 (NKJV)

24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.²⁵ And He said to them, "**The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over (Kurieo) them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'**²⁶ **But not so among you;** on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him **be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.**²⁷ "For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the **One who serves.**

Peter discusses true leadership authority.

1 Peter 5:1-4 (NKJV)

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed;² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;³ **nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples (Tupos) to the flock;**⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

In contrast to being "lords" we are to be "examples." Both in corporation governance issues, but especially in non business oriented issues.

"Be examples" - "Tupos", from which we get "type". To be a pattern, example, model, or standard. It means to so portray the image of the Servant, the Lord Jesus, that others are drawn to follow your pattern or example and do the will of God. Peter had learned that Jesus didn't use any other means to secure his following so he simply passes on what he has seen modeled for him. It's so exciting to recognize that it works. Peter was so committed to serving Jesus that history records for us he followed Him to the point of being crucified upside down. It simply doesn't require manipulation, control and intimidation to move people together towards God's vision for their corporate or individual lives. True servant leadership, given time to germinate, will produce the will of God in the lives of those being led. If it doesn't then we should have a little more confidence in the sovereignty of God, recognizing that it may not have been in His ultimate plan for certain things to take place, rather than trying to make something happen which in the end will do more to alienate those who follow due to undue pressure placed upon them.

Paul frequently challenged the flock to follow his example - 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7,9.

If leaders were far more concerned about having an example worth following, than demanding obedience, they would find that those who hunger for Christ will follow them.

Is Jesus, in John 13, telling His disciples that they are to think of those they serve as being their "Masters?" Is Jesus telling them that He is posturing Himself before his disciples as a servant to His masters? This fits pretty well with everything else Jesus has said about true leadership doesn't it?

It is the job of every leader to so manifest and create this impression in the lives of those he leads that they are convinced that he really believes Jesus' words apply to him.

In business matters, CEO leadership, yet with the servant heart of a shepherd.
In spiritual matters, pure servant hearted leadership.

Do these two functions overlap? Yes, at times, and we all need to be patient with one another as we try to figure out how to make them work. Will it be easy? Nope! Can it always work smoothly, probably not, but the harder we work at it, and ask Jesus for grace and wisdom, the better it can become. May the Lord so bless us!