

Four Works #3 SERVANT VISION 7 Teaching Sessions

Four Works of A Spiritual Leader

Session #3 As Servants, We Work!

I. Introduction: The Servant.

One of the most beautiful terms used to describe a spiritual leader is that of “minister.” The word literally means, “one who serves.” This expression and a similar one, “worker” describe the third work of a spiritual leader 2 Timothy 2:

2 Timothy 2: 24-25

**24 A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,
25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition...**

Also, another passage uses a similar description for the servant:

2 Timothy 2:15

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God,
a worker who does not need to be ashamed...**

A spiritual leader is a servant of the Lord. We skip over the word pretty quickly, but if we were to look at that word more closely, we would see that the word is from the Greek term *doulon* and actually means “bond servant,” the lowest of the slaves.

The word “servant” is used over 1,100 times in Scripture. The most common word for servant in Hebrew, *ebed*, contains two elements: work and obedience. Servants belong to other people and they performed a variety of work.

Witness the people called servants in the Old Testament:

- Abraham (Genesis 26:24)
- Jacob (Genesis 32:4)
- Joshua (Joshua 24:29)
- Ruth (Ruth 3:9)
- Hannah (1 Samuel 1:11)
- Jesse (1 Samuel 17:58)
- Daniel (Daniel 9:17)

Listen to this: Moses is called a servant about 40 times and David is called a servant more than 50 times.

In the New Testament, people called servants included:

- Paul (Titus 1:1)
- James (James 1:1)
- All believers are no longer “slaves to sin” but “slaves to righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18).

Also, in the New Testament, one of the terms for “servant” is *diakonos* or deacon. These people showed hospitality (Matthew 8:15), distributed food to the needy (Acts 6:1), and served the saints (1 Corinthians 16:15). From such a position, men like Philip became a mighty vessel in the early Church. Despise not the day of small things!

Servants of the Lord are in great company. And our understanding must be clear: As servants, we work!

II. SPIRITUAL LEADERS MODEL SERVANTHOOD.

A. We Serve First; Lead Second.

1. The “Servant-Leader” Concept.

In the 1970s, the phrase “servant leader” began to be the rage in leadership circles. A 2,000 year old truth was rediscovered in a modern setting. Until then, the most common form of leadership was autocratic —sometimes benevolent —but still autocratic.

Over time and with many books and articles written about the subject, a number of qualities emerged of the “servant leader.”

Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) is credited as advancing the concept of servant leadership. From him, writers like Stephen Covey, M. Scott Peck, John Carver and others have written about this form of leadership.

The premise is this:

The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?

—Robert K Greenleaf

2. 10 Qualities of Servant Leaders:

- Listen to differing opinions.
- Empathize with others.
- Seeks to heal hurts.
- Aware of issues facing everyone.
- Use of persuasion rather than authority.
- Dream great dreams.
- Foresight.
- View leadership as stewardship.
- Committed to growing people.
- Builds community.

—Larry C. Spears, “Character and Servant Leadership.”

B. Some Dislike Servanthood.

Do you remember the warning the Apostle John gave to young Gaius in 3 John? He told this young minister to not model himself after Diotrophes, but to follow after Demetrius. The Apostle of Love described Diotrophes as a man who loved preeminence — or coming first in everything. He described Demetrius as a man who had a good report of all men.

Some do seek preeminence. The mother of the Apostles Peter and John was in that camp. She knelt before Jesus and asked that her sons be seated to His right and left when He came into His kingdom.

Apparently, the sons were there too. Because Jesus asked them, “Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” And they both responded, “We are able.” (Matthew 20:20-23).

Jesus used this as a teaching moment. He said that in the worldly system, the rulers lord over the people. But, He said, in My Kingdom, “it shall not be so among you.”

Matthew 20:26:27

**26Whoever 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.”**

C. Jesus Modeled Servanthood.

The Book of Isaiah contains the “servant songs” (42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12). These largely point to the coming Messiah seen in Jesus Christ. That Jesus would come first not as a King, but as a Servant; not as a Conquering Lion, but as a Suffering Lamb.

Paul said of Jesus that He laid aside His majesty and took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7).

**He became the son of man that we might become the sons of God.
He put on humanity that we might put on immortality.
He came from heaven to earth that we might go from earth to heaven.
He left the region where the rivers never freeze, winds never blow,
frost never bites, flowers never fade;
Where there are no undertakers, no doctors needed, because no one is ever sick;
Where graveyards never haunt, death never comes, and no funerals are ever conducted.
(—“The Incomparable Christ”, Anonymous)**

In one of the great Oneness anthems of our movement, “Down From His Glory,” William Booth-Clibborn described our Lord’s willingness to descend:

**What condescension, bringing us redemption
That in the dead of night, not one faint hope in sight
God gracious, tender, laid aside His splendor**

Stooping to woo, to win, to save my soul!

God stooped — that we might stand.

Never more was this scene than on Calvary Eve. The disciples were in the Upper Room arguing amongst themselves about who was the greatest. Jesus humbled Himself to the role of a servant, picked up a towel and basin, and washed their feet.

Nik Wallenda is a high wire artist who recently crossed Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon. After the applause was finished and after the huge crowds and cameras left, Nik could be found picking up the trash the crowds left behind.

He said: “Three hours of cleaning up debris is good for my soul. Humility does not come naturally to me. So if I have to force myself into situations that are humbling, so be it....I know that I need to get down on my hands and knees like everyone else. I do it because it’s a way to keep from tripping. As a follower of Jesus, I see Him washing the feet of others. I do it because if I don’t serve others, I’ll be serving nothing but my ego. (Nik Wallenda with David Ritz, “Balance,” Faith Words, 2013).

Yes, if Jesus can do it; so can we.

The chief qualifications of a servant are humility and obedience. But, what work do we do as servants?

III. The Six-Fold Work of A Servant.

As servants, we are basically at the Master’s call. Yet, in Scripture, one sees six primary areas where we serve:

A. We Speak on God’s Behalf (Eleazar, Genesis 24).

The servant spoke as his master instructed. Abraham sent his most trusted servant Eleazar back to his homeland to find a bride for his son Isaac. Reading the 24th chapter of Genesis illustrates the important work of fairly representing what God has told us.

The prophet Jeremiah rebuked those who claimed to speak on God’s behalf, but actually spoke what they wanted to say (Jeremiah 23:16-21).

When standing behind the pulpit doing this work for God, we should remember these important steps:

1. Pray until your spirit is right.
2. Study until your heart is full.
3. Summarize until your thought is clear.
4. Preach with a heart on fire.
5. And always land on time.

Just because we say something, doesn’t mean it has been communicated. We should speak clearly and repetitiously if we want it understood.

B. We Act as Peacemaker.

Joseph told his brothers traveling from Egypt back to Israel, “See that you fall not out by the way” (Genesis 45:24). He knew his brothers—how mercurial and hot-tempered they were. Joseph saw himself as a peacemaker.

Job once asked for a “daysman,” a mediator to sort out his problem (Job 9:33). Just as Jesus hung between the penitent and impenitent thieves on Calvary, so too do we find ourselves in the middle at times.

No one enjoys resolving conflicts, but it’s a requirement of a servant. We work for peace.

Spiritual leaders should always be on the side of resolving issues; not making them.

It’s not always possible. Paul recognized that saying, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18). Granted there are some people who relish sowing discord and stirring up strife.

But, we bring two buckets to any conflict. One is filled with water; the second is filled with gasoline. We choose which to put on the fire.

Paul once pleaded to two women to resolve their problems in the church (Philippians 4:2). Conflict is nothing new. But, we should seek to resolve it as quickly as possible. A little leaven of conflict can affect the entire church.

C. We Manage God’s Resources.

Time, talent and treasure — none of it belongs to us. But, God loaned it to us to watch over.

We should be careful stewards of all God has entrusted us with. Jesus said if we are faithful with the little things, He will make us ruler over many things. (Matthew 25:21).

How these are distributed matters to the Master. He was the one who saw the widow place two mites in the offering. He valued her gift more than those who gave more monetarily, because she gave out of her want.

We should never forget that we are managing resources that God cares about.

D. We Involve Others in our Service.

As servants, we are unafraid of work. We do not mind doing work ourselves—in fact, we often prefer it.

Yet, we must involve others in our service. Namely, this is the way discipleship takes place. As people learn to serve God in various ways, they draw closer to the One who is the Servant to all. They grow more like Him.

We do not have a monopoly on ministry. Rather, we have an obligation to share our burdens with others to help them grow accustomed to laboring for the Lord.

E. We Keep our Own Walk With God Intact.

Although we serve the Lord with gladness, ministry can drain us. We must endeavor to keep our hearts and minds filled with God's presence and power. Otherwise, we will simply run out of strength.

The ministry in the New Testament is patterned in many ways after the Levitical service in the Old Testament. We labor around the house of God.

One of the works around God's House was to keep the fire burning. In Leviticus 6:10-13, the ministry "removed the ashes" from the altar and "added firewood." We must take time to keep the fire burning in our heart.

Obededom did that. You remember this man? The ark of the covenant had been parked at his house for 90 days. So blessed was he and his family that he followed the ark back to the house of God. He served anyway that he could around God's house. 200 years later, the children of Obededom were still serving there.

F. We Work Where We Are Assigned.

Be patient on your ministry. One of the chief pitfalls of people who would serve God is they get in too much of a hurry. Wait upon the Lord.

You may think, "I could serve better over here." But, God has assigned you to another place. Work where you are assigned and when God decides your time is finished there, He will redirect you.

There's an old story called, "Acres of Diamonds," where a traveler stopped at a man's house and told him the story of diamonds. So enflamed was the property holder with the desire to find diamonds that he left his home and began searching the world over for diamonds. He died in his pursuit of diamonds.

Years later, the same traveler returned to the house to find a new property owner. Also to discover that the rarest of diamonds were found on the very same property. In fact, it was not a few diamonds — but acres of diamonds.

Our ministry is not "out there," but it's close to where you are. It's within your reach.

God will use what you make available to Him. He asked Moses, "What do you have in your hand?" (Exodus 4:2). And with that staff, God led His people out.

Elisha asked the woman whose sons were to be taken away by the creditor, "What do you have in your house?" (2 Kings 4:2). With that small cruse of oil, God multiplied her resources to exceed the need.

Stay where God called you. One of the chief reasons churches grow is that they have leaders who refuse to leave. They stay where God has assigned them and they sink deep roots into the community and area.

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You may ask, "How can I become a servant leader?" One way to do it is to be around servant leaders and let their qualities rub off on you. But, consciously, there are four shifts that must be made:

IV. FOUR SHIFTS TO BECOME A SERVANT LEADER.

A. Move from "Serve Us" to "Service" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

It is one of the most important shifts that we can make in spirit: from SERVE ME...to let me SERVE YOU. If you want to be used, get ready to feel used.

We each approach relationships with one of two attitudes: "Tie my shoe" or the "Let me tie your shoe." Serve me...or let me serve you.

From SERVE US to SERVICE.

This is a vital paradigm shift that leads to a servant's heart. We began to grow when we understand that no one was put on this earth to serve us; but we were definitely put on this earth to serve others.

B. Move from "Me" to "We" (Philippians 2:4).

The Apostle Paul made an astounding statement about Timothy to the church in Caesarea Philippi.

Philippians 2:4
Let each of you look out not only for his own interests,
but also for the interests of others.

In the same chapter...Paul puts for an illustration of this admonition. TIMOTHY

Philippians 2:20-21
20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.
21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

Timothy caught this. That SELF interests conflict with DIVINE interests.

Whether Timothy was in the spotlight or not.
Whether he got his way or not.
He was a team-player.

He took the long journey from "Me" to "We."

In a similar sense, each of us must value our fellow laborers — our yokefellows — our fellow bondservants. We each have a role to play. We are each needed to do the Master's bidding. There is no place for rivalries and feuds. We are to support one another.

It's not about "Me, mine, or myself." It's about all of us.

C. Move From Impressing At a Distance to Impacting Up Close (Luke 10:32-33).

Servant leaders don't work from a distance. They don't perform their tasks miles away. They draw near to the human condition. They draw close to the need.

Jesus told the story about a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell among thieves. Two people passed him by: a priest — and then a Levite:

Luke 10:32-34

32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.

And when he saw him, he had compassion.

34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The Priest and Levite...impressed from a distance.

The Samaritan impacted up close.

Ministering up close tests our authenticity and keeps us real. It keeps us relevant for what God wants from us.

D. Move from Suppressing the Generations to Supporting the Generations (Romans 16).

Servants train the next generation of servants. Moses trained Joshua; but Joshua did not mentor his successors. Such that when Joshua died, the next generation did not serve God with the same devotion (Joshua 2:10).

We owe five things to the next generation:

1. We must empower them.
2. We must equip them.
3. We must prepare them.
4. We must affirm them.
5. We must encourage them.

A recent study of a denominal church recorded these staggering statistics:

- 89% of the youth leave the church when they graduate from high school.
- Lowest number of young ministers showing up for their conferences than ever before.
- Ministers and delegates to their conferences are growing older and older.

We should take no comfort in that being some other organization. We must purpose in our hearts to shift our attention to the next generation of leaders.

Romans 16 is a pivotal passage of Scripture in this area. Here, we find some of the people on the Apostle Paul's team. He greets and salutes his fellow servants — 26 people in all.

Who has ever heard of some of these people? Junia, Julia, Urbanus, Andronicus & so forth? Yet, these were members of Paul's Team — and what a team they were — a team that put saints in Caesar's household. A team that defied death; that had revival in the midst of great persecution — that went underground with their worship; that subdued the mighty Roman empire.

Don't suppress the next generation; support them. Seek their input and involvement.

We should view service as a momentary honor with lasting rewards.

V. Serving Is a Momentary Honor with Lasting Rewards.

Don't seek positions. If you have them, don't let them go to your head. The joy is in the serving and you can serve whether you have a title or not.

Don't hold onto positions. It's not the position that makes the ministry; it's the ministry that magnifies the position.

Ministry is God's idea, not ours.

Ministry is a privilege, not a problem.

Ministry enhances personal growth.

Ministry (service) is pleasing to God.

Ministry unleashes the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ministry multiplies the church's potential.

And someday, we will hear our Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Our labors are not in vain, so let's not be weary in well doing.

Perhaps we need to revisit the Upper Room and get a long look at the King of the Universe stooping down to wipe His disciples' filthy feet. And we need to remember, "We are not above our Master."

And we also need to remember that at best, we are "unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10), meaning that God has done so much more for us than we could ever do for Him.

In both Exodus (21:5-6) and Deuteronomy (15:16-17), when a servant has paid his debt he can choose to stay with his master. But, he must plainly say that he loves his master, his master's family, and everything the master has done for him.

Have you made it plain lately? Have you come to grips with this whole area of servanthood? Do this work from a heart of love and let the Master be pleased.