

Title: WestPark Values: Part 3, Servant Leadership.

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Passage: Multiple

Big idea: Value: Servant Leadership. Turning Power and Influence Upside-down.



What makes for a good leader? And, what makes for a bad leader?

Here are some characteristics that I came up with for both good and bad leaders:

Leadership Qualities	
Good	Bad
Strong	Selfish
Trustworthy	Anxious
Faithful	Lazy
Disciplined	Fearful
Focussed	Unmotivated
Purposeful	Dishonest
Humble	Proud/Arrogant
Determined	Self-Seeking
Honest	

The characteristics of a godly leader can be found in 1 Peter 5:1-5.

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

1 Peter 5:1-5

In my life, I have been privileged to have exceptional leaders over me, and beside me. I know that this is rare, and I know that sometimes leadership is abused. In these cases, the importance of the leader themselves becomes the goal of leadership, instead of the care and condition of those being led.

This is not the kind of leadership that is essential in the Christian life.

We can think that all leaders will fail us because this has been the trajectory of most of the leaders we see, in politics, in schools, even in churches. While we know none of these people are perfect, leaders are, generally speaking, held to the standard of everyone else’s values and everyone else’s priorities.

The leaders in our lives can include our parents, coaches, captains of sports teams, teachers, professors, peers, government officials, pastors, elders, and list goes on. And while I have, generally, had excellent leaders,

none of these leaders are capable of leading perfectly. But this does not detract from the great, significant importance of this leadership thing.

I picked through some really great leadership quotes to get us into the frame of mind, about what leadership looks like.

“Being a leader means helping those in your circle of influence.” Nick Chellsen

"Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another." John C. Maxwell

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way." John C. Maxwell

"Everything rises and falls on leadership." John C. Maxwell

So, to understand servant leadership, let's break up what servants and leaders do.

What do Servants Do?

They provide a service, they alleviate a burden, they ensure a job getting done.

What do Leaders do?

The point is in the right direction and lead us in that same way.

The Model of Jesus:

HUMILITY

Servant leadership starts with a focus on Jesus' Humility.

In Philippians, Paul writes out one of the most outlandish things we believe as Christians. It is that God came into human history, as our flesh to serve us.

Kings DON'T serve. Kings are to be served, but Jesus does differently.

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:1-8

Philippians 2:3-4, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

This passage is about the importance of the glory of Christ in his own humility, and how he gives fully of himself to serve those who reject him and cast his importance aside for their own.

Now this passage is framed inside of a very important passage in the New Testament. It is about how Jesus humbled himself in the full display of his glory, by shielding it, and taking on humanity, coming as a servant, but extending his service to others out of love, to the point of death on a cross.

There is this mind-boggling majesty of the Creator expressed as a fragile creation. There is the all-powerful One as a helpless baby, a growing child, a man hanging on a cross. There is the source and sustainer of life

becoming hungry, thirsty, and needing to sleep. There is the only One worthy of worship on His knees with a towel in hand, serving others by cleaning their dirty feet.

“The authority by which the Christian leader leads is not power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reasoned persuasion. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve [...] Jesus made this absolutely plain. The chief characteristic of Christian leaders, he insisted, is humility not authority, and gentleness not power”. John Stott

Timothy Keller so poignantly shares, “humility is so shy. If you begin talking about it, it leaves.”

The Method of Jesus:

SERVICE

Servant leadership is fostered
by engaging in Jesus’ method.

Jesus’ method is service and being an upside down leader by putting others first.

“A successful person finds the right place for himself. But a successful leader finds the right place for others.” John C. Maxwell

This is where so many leaders fall. They do not engage Jesus’ method, of serving others. And really this is the hardest thing to do.

Having an attitude like Jesus is one thing, but to actually live like Him is something very different, and very difficult.

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸ Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:35-45

This passage flows from a conversation that James and John had with Jesus. Matthew’s Gospel records James’ and John’s mother asking Jesus the question on their behalf.

Jesus’ response to their question of “greatness” is abrupt and actually leads the other disciples to be indignant. Their focus was on their own glory, on their own importance, and on the value of being seen by others, in the same way the “important” people were seen in their culture.

Because of this, Jesus responds exactly how he always responds. By turning things upside down. In Jesus upside down kingdom, he puts the guys in a position of ownership not of status, but of service.

Mark 10:42, “And Jesus called them to him and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.’”

The Gentile rulers, the Romans, lorded their prestige over them, and they exercised their authority in a way that suppressed others, beat them down and placed them in a position of being less than.

Jesus is adamant that this is not to be the case with his leaders. Jesus' leaders that follow in his footsteps, need to get into the pattern of being the servant. Whoever would be the first among you needs to position himself as last. The one who wants to be great, needs to be the first one to take the position of lowly slave.

BECAUSE...

Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"

Let's dissect this a little further.

We know who Jesus is, he is God incarnate, he is the second person of the trinity, he is eternal in his power and glory, and he deserves to be served by the angels, by creation, by creatures and by humanity. But he comes to set an example of love and submission, and of service and sacrifice.

If He, so great and eternal, is willing to serve, how much more should we, servants under this King be willing to serve.

This is exactly why the disciples were so aghast when Jesus washed their feet.

John 13:3-5, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

Take note of how this passage starts. Jesus has had all authority given into his hands, he knows that he is going back to God where he is going to be exalted; but Jesus does not look for his own glory, instead looks to serve.

Later on, in John 13, Jesus poses a question to his disciples.

John 13:12, "When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you?'"

If I am so worthy of praise, and I am willing to serve you, then of course your response is to understand that you are no more valuable than others. You must submit to this upside-down kingdom rule. The greatest is the greatest servant.

Jesus continues:

John 13:15-17, "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

Because we are not greater than Jesus, we are supposed to do as he does. What else could possibly come from this? Are we to think of ourselves higher than Him? That the things he does for humanity, we are somehow above, or that it is below our dignity? No, leadership is service. Leadership is sacrifice. Leadership is submission to a greater authority, Jesus.

"True greatness, true leadership, is found in giving yourself in service to others, not in coaxing or inducing others to serve you." J. Oswald Sanders

I love this quote. It is the upside down nature of Jesus' wonderful Kingdom to not coax others into serving you, your mission, your desires, but instead, to serve others for their benefit.

I use this phrase with our worship team regularly, "you don't work for me, I work for you".

This should be the case of every leader. It should be expected that the leader's job is to help others get to the place of their greatest kingdom impact. To help the least of these find their value. To help the broken to find hope.

Leadership should never be self exalting; it should never be a tool to climb a ladder of successes.

The Multiplication of Jesus: INTENTION

Servant leadership succeeds when
Jesus focused leaders are multiplied.

Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Look at something very interesting that Jesus says as he sends out the apostles to do his kingdom work.

He says to baptize people in the name, or the authority, of the Father, Son, and Spirit, but then to *teach* them to obey everything Jesus has commanded them.

Now in a Christian context, this is mostly about evangelism and about discipleship, proclaiming and pursuing Jesus.

However, notice that the text does not say *command* them to obey what I have taught you.

This is an important leadership qualifier. Leaders are to multiply leaders who follow Jesus, not leaders who follow leaders.

Another way of putting this familiar text would be to utilize the root words of it.

Teach others to conform to my orders.

Do not command them and walk away. Instead, leadership of a spiritual and servant nature, takes the long road, in the same way that Jesus took the long road with his disciples. As the disciples now turn into the Jesus leaders in the world, it was their job to help lead the people to *maturity in faith*, not just *declarations of faith*. And based on everything that Jesus did, taught, and preached for us to emulate, it comes from the posture and position of service to another.

In teaching them to obey what Jesus has commanded of his own leaders, is to suggest a few things:

1. Leaders are under strict orders to do things in the way of the master.
2. The leader's job is not to command others, but to teach.

So, what are we to do with all of this important information?

First, is to understand what Servant Leadership is, and what its supposed to look like, as modelled after Jesus. Second, is to engage in Jesus centered Servant Leadership to those we have influence with, and "over". Third, to submit ourselves to the leadership of godly servant leaders. Fourth, to pray for our leaders as they serve over us.

While I was thinking about this. I started to notice some things about Christian leadership that are important to keep focus on. Servants of Jesus aren't actually in the business of creating their own methods, or their own structures, or their own goals. It isn't the job of the Christian to build anything new, instead Christians are to facilitate what has already been given.

At times it is so easy to start doing leadership on our own, to forgo our dependance on Jesus, and try and accomplish things without Him and the work of Holy Spirit among us.

Nothing could be more foolish.

It dawned on me the significance of ensuring I do not try to manufacture anything on my own.

Servant Leaders do not manufacture love: they display it.

Servant Leaders do not manufacture grace: they distribute it.

Servant Leaders do not manufacture burdens: they deliver us from them.

Servant Leaders do not manufacture hope: they direct our attention to it.



In discipleship, in evangelism, in leadership; the goal is to do our part and believe that God is the one who is able and capable of doing what is necessary.

How you can be invested as a Servant Leader?

First, take a posture of humility in the way that Jesus has modelled it.

Second, ensure you are leading for the right reasons, serving as Jesus served.

Third, be intentional and self-sacrificial, to multiply your influence for Jesus.

For those of you who serve and lead in the ministries here at WestPark, work to model after Jesus' model, method, and multiplication. And, if you are not already serving, get involved in an area of ministry here at WestPark, and practice this servant leadership.