

Signposts for the Journey



Volume Three:
Reflections of a Servant Leader on
Daniel, Paul, Trust, Timing, Temptation, and More...

Jon Byler

52 more reflections that will take your leadership level down to that of a servant!

What servant leaders around the world are saying....

"I was introduced to these leadership reflections over 10 years ago and these reflections have been a part of my weekly study since then. I also follow you via Twitter. Thank you for enriching and enabling me to enrich others, those I lead and serve."
Steven, UGANDA

"Thank you for all the teaching and words of encouragement that you send to us, they help us to stand and do what the Lord has called us to."
Manuel, MOZAMBIQUE

"I personally find this challenging and so inspiring. I love it. Thank God for the insight you have shared with me. God bless you and may He continue to use you to share with me the wisdom as regarding leadership."
Wackson, MALAWI

"Thanks for the inspiring messages. My leadership style has benefited in a huge way."
Britias, ZAMBIA

"Thank you for your heart for God and how you serve Christian leaders with your creative writing. I'm grateful for the encouragement I receive from these teachings!"
Wayne, USA

Jon Byler has a passion to see leaders grow and develop, becoming like Christ in their character, skill and knowledge. He has served the global church for over 20 years through writing, teaching and training. He currently lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA where he serves with Global Disciples as the Global Leadership Developer. He has authored several books in addition to this one, including Volume One and Two in this series, "The Heart of Christian Leadership," "The Art of Christian Leadership," and "7 Keys to Financial Freedom."



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LEADER ON DANIEL, PAUL, TRUST,
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VOLUME THREE

by Jon Byler

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the servant leaders who are carrying out their vision in spite of severe opposition. You daily face threats and suffering that would make many leaders turn back. Your courage to persevere in the face of hardship is an inspiration to me. I look forward to hearing more about your journey when we meet in Heaven with other heroes of faith.

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INTRODUCTION

I'm on a journey, a lifetime adventure of learning what it means to lead like Jesus. There are ups and downs on this journey and many times there is a choice of which direction to take. There might be two or more very different ways to lead and it is not always evident at first glance which one is the right direction. Often the path of servant leadership is not the way that seems natural or easy. These choices are difficult and the outcomes are not always immediately evident. At these times I need a signpost to point me in the right path so that I will reach my desired destination. I look to Scripture for these signposts. Many times these are found in the life and teachings of Jesus himself. At other times they are found in the stories of fellow pilgrims who have gone before on this leadership journey. I learn from their strengths and weaknesses, their successes and failures. Their lives serve as signposts for me.

Join me on this journey as I reflect on signposts that point us in the direction of servant leadership. We will look at the life of Daniel and Paul, reflect on how to build and maintain trust, how to deal with issues of timing, taming our tongues and much more. Reflect on the questions that follow each chapter and ask God to guide you in honest assessment and specific plans to strengthen your leadership.

There are 52 reflections in this book, enough for one every week of the year. I encourage you to walk slowly on this journey, allowing time to reflect on how each signpost impacts your leadership. Take time to write out answers to the personal reflection questions at the end of each chapter. These can be shared with a friend, mentor or groups of others who join you on this journey. You may choose to read this from the beginning to the end, or you may see a specific chapter that seems more relevant to a current need

you have in your own journey and decide to read that chapter first.

These reflections were originally distributed as bi-weekly emails, *Reflections for Servant Leaders*, and are now published in book and electronic format. I acknowledge with gratitude the hard work of Rebecca Krupp and Linda Boll who spent hours preparing this volume for publication. I also thank Rachel Byler, my daughter-in-law, for her creative work on the cover design.

I remain, yours on the journey.
Jon Byler



1. KNEE POWER

Leaders recognize and often seek power. Paul, in Ephesians 3:14-21, prayed for power, but a very different kind of power than we often look for in leadership. He recognized that servant leaders operate with knee power. He opened his prayer with these words, *“For this reason I kneel before the Father,”* and then mentions power three times in this short prayer. Each reveals significant insights for servant leaders.

Knee power recognizes Christ’s presence. Paul asks first of all that we would be strengthened with power so that *“Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”* Prayer fills us with the indwelling presence of Christ. Servant leaders need to take time in God’s presence daily until they are aware that He is dwelling in their hearts.

God’s presence throughout the day provides guidance and wisdom to the servant leader. When faced with a difficult leadership issue, the servant leader can whisper a quick prayer to Christ for guidance. Christ’s presence provides inner peace in the midst of chaotic situations. His presence provides perspective on the future, which enables the servant leader to see beyond the immediate discouragement. His presence makes the leader exercise

caution in a decision that looks very simple on the surface. His presence makes the servant leader more aware of opportunities to use their position of influence to bring others into a relationship with Christ.

Knee power reveals Christ's love. Paul asks that we would *"have power...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."* Recognizing Christ's love enables servant leaders to be secure in who they are, which produces the confidence they need to lead well. Further, it frees them to extend love and compassion to those they lead. Leaders who do not recognize and embrace God's love are often insecure, demanding, and more likely to insult and abuse those under their authority.

Servant leaders recognize that this is not something they do alone. It is *"together with all the saints"* that the breadth of God's love is recognized. Servant leaders see differences in personality, gifting, abilities and preferences as opportunities to more fully understand God's incredible love. They celebrate different perspectives on their leadership teams. They see these differences as a great place to reflect on God's amazing love!

Knee power releases Christ's power. Lastly, Paul describes the *"power that is at work within us."* He boldly asserts that, because of this power, God is *"able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine!"* This is good news for results-oriented servant leaders. Ordinary leadership vision can help move an organization forward, but knee power produces results far beyond the leaders' imagination! Notice that these results come only after experiencing Christ's presence and love.

All these actions flow out of the servant leader's knee power. Does your leadership flow out of prayer, or is it dependent on your own wisdom and ability? Business leaders, professionals, homemakers, pastors and all other servant leaders can learn to lead with knee power. Take a moment now to strengthen your leadership with a time on

1. Knee Power

your knees. Praying Ephesians 3:14-21 for yourself and those you lead is a good place to start.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. How much time do I spend on my knees?

What would it look like for me to cultivate a daily discipline of spending enough time in prayer to lead with an awareness of Christ's presence?

2. Can I point to times in my leadership where I sensed that Christ's presence was clearly guiding a decision I made?

What can I do to experience this more frequently?

3. Do I have a personal sense of the greatness of God's love for me?

Can I easily extend love to others?

4. In what ways does the diversity on my leadership team help me understand the breadth of God's love?



2. BRANCH LEADERSHIP

Servant leaders recognize and practice ‘branch leadership.’ Jesus described this type of leadership in His last leadership training session when He said, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5). What does branch leadership look like for servant leaders?

Servant leaders recognize their dependence on Jesus. Jesus made it very clear that there was a difference between Him and His followers. He was the ‘vine’ they were ‘branches.’ The branch is totally dependent on the vine for life and nourishment. Jesus says, *“Apart from me you can do nothing.”* Leaders love to make things happen and naturally want to be in control of their world. But servant leaders acknowledge that they are not in control; they are totally dependent on Jesus. He is the source of their power; He is the giver of the gifts they possess. The ability to influence people or to make money does not come from within us; it comes from a connection to Jesus. We might be able to point to things we think we have accomplished, but Jesus says that without Him it is ‘nothing.’ Churches built without Him are nothing.

Business success without Him is nothing. Many years earlier, God cautioned His people, *“But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today”* (Deuteronomy 8:18). Servant leaders are free from the tyranny of needing to be in control. Do you acknowledge that without Jesus, your leadership is nothing?

Servant leaders understand their potential in Jesus.

“If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.” All leaders have a passion to succeed and find ways to measure that success. They want fruit! For some, it is profit, for others, it is the size of their church or organization. For others, success is defined by what others think about them. Jesus is not opposed to fruit, in fact He wants *‘much fruit.’* But He calls servant leaders to recognize that fruitfulness comes when they are connected to Him, not as a result of their own efforts. This fruit may not always look like we anticipate, but when leaders stay connected to Jesus, their potential greatly increases. He wants much fruit from your leadership! Do you recognize the tremendous potential you have because you are connected to Jesus?

Servant leaders pursue intimacy with Jesus. When leaders understand their dependence on Jesus and the potential they have as they stay connected to Him, they will naturally take the action step of pursuing intimacy with Jesus. They will passionately seek to learn more about what it means to ‘remain’ or ‘abide’ in Jesus. They want to stay connected to the ‘vine.’ They find time to nurture their personal relationship with Jesus through prayer and reflection. They learn to ask Jesus for His direction before moving forward with plans. They cry out to Him for true fruit from their leadership. They move intimacy with Jesus to the top of their ‘to do’ list. Are you pursuing intimacy with Jesus?

2. Branch Leadership

Don't measure your leadership success by the external standards of numbers and statistics, but by your intimacy with Jesus. As you practice 'branch leadership,' your life will produce much fruit for the glory of God.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. In what specific ways has my leadership in the past week reflected my dependence on Jesus?
2. In what areas am I tempted to move forward on my own strength?
3. How do I currently measure my leadership success?
How should I measure it?
4. What 'fruit' does God want to produce more of through my leadership?
5. What daily actions can I take to pursue intimacy with Jesus?



3. IT'S A MATTER OF TRUST: GET IT

How much do your followers trust you? Your answer to that question will determine to a large degree how effective your leadership will be. Trust is so vital to your leadership that we will take the next three chapters to examine how to get it, how to keep it and how to restore it. Servant leaders *get trust* from their followers by focusing on the foundation of solid character. They recognize the following principles about trust.

Servant leaders recognize the power of trust in leadership. Leadership simply cannot function without trust. Every leader/follower relationship is based on some level of trust, whether formally written or quietly assumed. If people lose trust, they leave, or in situations where they can't leave, they make themselves ungovernable as with King Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:1-16). The level of trust that people have in your leadership determines your effectiveness as a leader and sets the tone for the entire organization. If you build an organization with a strong level of trust, it will be significantly more effective. Servant leaders acknowledge that trust is a gift from God which empowers them to lead.

Servant leaders recognize trust must be earned.

Some leaders assume that because they hold a position or title, followers should trust them. Trust may be granted initially to a person in a position, but servant leaders realize that, over time, trust must be earned whether in family relationships at home, in the church, in business or any other form of leadership. Servant leaders recognize that they are responsible to act in ways that build trust, and that they are continually either gaining or losing trust. They accept personal responsibility to live on a higher standard than those around them and acknowledge that they can be trustworthy regardless of the actions of others. Servant leaders work hard to build trust, not just to climb the leadership ladder, but so that they can more effectively influence others to be like Jesus.

Servant leaders recognize that trust flows from character. Character, consistently expressed over time, yields trust. It's so obvious that we can easily miss it, followers will trust you if you lead with integrity; if not, they will lose trust in you. Almost daily I read stories of leaders whose character flaws cost them their ability to lead. Servant leaders, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are strategically positioned to live with the highest levels of character. Even when they fail, they are not afraid to acknowledge their mistakes and try again.

Servant leaders recognize that character development does not happen by accident; it is forged as leaders make right choices over time. There are no shortcuts and no microwave solutions for developing character. Servant leaders are willing to pay the price of developing a plan to build their character not just because it is a good leadership practice but because it is their heart's desire to become more like Jesus. They are ruthless in self-examination to expose character flaws and seek God's help and the help of mentors and accountability partners to develop in areas of weakness.

3. It's A Matter Of Trust: Get It

Samuel, as he finished his time of leading Israel, issued this challenge, *“Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right”* (1 Samuel 12:3). His trust was earned by consistent behavior over a long time.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Does my leadership inspire trust?

How would my followers answer that question about me?

2. Is my trustworthiness growing or diminishing?

What evidence can I point to that illustrates this?

3. Am I aware of flaws in my character?

- Do I have obvious character flaws? (Anger, bitterness, immorality, bad language, lateness, lack of discipline with physical body, etc.)
- Am I in control of my tongue?
- Do I have respect for authority over me?
- Do I abuse my authority over others in any way?
- Can others trust that I will do what I say I will do?

3. It's A Matter Of Trust: Get It

- Are there promises I have made in the last month which I have not fulfilled?
- Do I have 'secret' sins that are unknown to others?
- Do I treat 'weak' people in a Christ-like way?
- Are my motives pure?
- Are my moods stable?
- Do I keep the confidences of those who trust me with their stories?

4. Do I have a plan to develop my character?

Are there persons who can speak into my life in the area of character flaws?



4. IT'S A MATTER OF TRUST: KEEP IT

Getting trust is an issue every leader needs to work at, but it's only the beginning of the journey. Servant leaders work to *keep* the trust of those they lead.

Accept the challenge of keeping trust. Servant leaders recognize that being consistent enough over time to keep trust is not an easy task for any leader. They realize that the level of trust with followers is always in a state of motion, either increasing or decreasing. A sudden mistake is sometimes all that is needed to destroy years of building trust. Recent failures in the church and corporate world reflect how quickly trust can be lost. Servant leaders accept this challenge and ask for God's help to consistently be trustworthy. They recognize that the results are worth the effort.

Take responsibility for the level of trust. Who is responsible for the level of trust between you and your followers? Only you! If you have served for an extended time in your current leadership position, the level of trust is directly a result of your leadership. If you have recently taken a leadership position, recognize that past experiences shape people's trust level, but you are now the person to

lead the group forward. Taking responsibility for the current level of trust does not make you guilty of the past, but means you take ownership of the present. Take responsibility for understanding the context of your leadership. What kind of leadership is expected and how is trust earned or granted by the followers in your setting? What is the history of the group you lead in regard to trust, and how does that impact how you need to lead?

Commit to build a culture of trust. Servant leaders aim for more than just personal integrity and consistency. They use their influence to build an environment of trust with those they serve. What would it look like if your entire church or organization was trustworthy? Servant leaders build a culture of trust by modeling trustworthiness and by modeling trust in others.

Model trustworthiness by focusing on living a consistent life of integrity. After leaders gain trust with followers there is a temptation to begin taking leadership shortcuts, assuming they have earned the right to be trusted. For example, instead of going through the process of engaging key leaders in a crucial decision, a leader who has earned trust might simply announce the plan assuming that people will follow. Ask yourself, can your followers have absolute confidence that what you say is always true? Have you appropriately admitted mistakes you have made to them? Do you consciously seek ways to open your heart to others? Would your followers describe you as a transparent leader? Paul challenged the believers in Corinth, “*We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also*” (2 Corinthians 6:12-13).

Model trust in others by expressing your confidence in them. Verbally say, “I trust you” and release followers to do their jobs. Appropriate accountability is still needed, but demonstrate that you trust others. Trusting them does not

4. It's A Matter Of Trust: Keep It

mean that you expect perfection; they will make mistakes just like you do. But servant leaders not only seek to be trustworthy but consciously give the gift of trust to those they lead.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Do I realize how difficult it is to maintain trust over a long period of time with those I am leading?

Am I seeking God's strength to be consistent?

2. Do those I lead have past experiences that make it easier or more difficult for them to trust my leadership?

How should I adjust my leadership to reflect these realities?

3. After establishing trust, in what ways am I tempted to take leadership 'shortcuts'?

4. In what ways do I model trust in those who follow me?

Have I told anyone lately, "I trust you"? To whom should I say this today?



5. IT'S A MATTER OF TRUST: RECOVER IT

In the two previous chapters we examined how to *get* trust and how to *keep* it. But what happens when trust is lost? Recovering trust is one of the most difficult tasks servant leaders can face. Three steps will help you on the journey.

Identify what happened. Look for the reasons trust has been lost. Was it your mistake or a character failure? Did the failure come from a former leader or something that happened in the history of the group you now lead? Was it a single incident or a series of events that caused the followers to lose trust? Servant leaders take the time to look for answers to these questions so they can determine how to lead their group forward and rebuild trust.

Acknowledge mistakes. After you identify what has happened, appropriately acknowledge the mistakes made by yourself or other leaders. The followers already know what happened; they only wonder if their leader will address the issue or not. Leaders often feel that we must maintain a role of perfection. Nothing is further from the truth. When leaders refuse to openly take personal responsibility for their failures, they only deepen the deficit

of trust. Based on the circumstances of your situation, this may need to be done privately to a few individuals or at a public meeting. Servant leaders are willing to take the initiative to acknowledge what has gone wrong. David, after his sin with Bathsheba, was able to openly admit his sin and ask for forgiveness. *“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me”* (Psalm 51:3).

As you openly acknowledge the hurts from the past, prepare yourself to take the heat that will result. In cases where you have been wrong and failed, God will need to work in your life to rebuild your character, and it will be a time of testing for you in your spiritual journey. When others were responsible for lost trust, some of the pain or anger that followers experienced may be directed at you. In any case, you will be called to a greater depth of personal humility, a part of God’s plan to shape and strengthen your character. Servant leaders are willing to allow God to do this work in their lives.

Commit to rebuild. Make a commitment to do whatever it takes to rebuild the trust of your followers. The process of restoring trust will test your commitment to God, others, and the process itself. Recognize that it will take time, even more time than it took to establish trust initially, since now you begin from a deficit. There will likely be some resistance to overcome. You may need to seek reconciliation between yourself and those who have been hurt in the past, or to bring together persons who have been directly involved in the situation that destroyed trust.

As you rebuild trust, lead with an open heart. Where trust has been destroyed, people build walls of protection that are natural defense mechanisms to avoid further pain. Servant leaders recognize that followers find it difficult to trust a leader who is not open. They seek God’s grace to keep their heart open to followers and thereby model what it means to trust again. This may mean that you appropriately disclose what you are doing to rebuild trust or

5. It's A Matter Of Trust: Recover It

reveal some of the pain you are going through in the time of rebuilding trust.

Finally, servant leaders maintain hope that trust can be restored. God gives grace to trust again and the power to offer grace to those who need to regain their trust in us.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. In places where trust has been broken, have I done all I can to restore trust?
2. In my leadership context, what are the reasons trust has been lost?

What has been the result of this loss?

Which persons are most deeply impacted?

What is the level of my current relationship with them?

3. What is an appropriate way for me to acknowledge the loss of trust to my followers?

How can I take personal responsibility for the restoration of trust with my followers?

4. What key individuals do I need to meet with to begin rebuilding trust?



6. LEADING WITH PURPOSE

Everyone longs to feel significant and to know that their life has purpose. Many leaders find this purpose in their *performance*, but servant leaders discover the power of leading with *purpose*.

Paul provides this perspective for servant leaders when he says, *“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

What a powerful statement! *“Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”* Your leadership is not empty or without meaning. What does it mean to lead with purpose?

Leading with purpose begins with relationship. Paul recognizes that the work his readers are doing is “of the Lord” and “in the Lord.” Servant leaders find purpose in their work because it is not their work, but the work of Jesus. This is not just for church workers; it is for every servant leader who is consumed with passion to make their life count for God. Factory workers, teachers, professionals, and farmers all labor *“in the Lord.”* Do you see your leadership as working for Jesus?

Leading with purpose focuses on the work instead of results. Leaders love results and work hard for them. When things are going well all leaders love the question, “How are things going?” They love to report that the business is growing, the church is expanding, or the income is increasing. These results validate their work and make them feel worthwhile. But what happens when the results are not good? Many leaders become discouraged and feel like failures. With every stock market crash a few leaders commit suicide. In less dramatic ways, after a discouraging experience in the church, a pastor quits, or a business leader is depressed after looking at the quarterly report.

But Paul doesn’t say anything about results. He simply says, “*Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*” He implies that our purpose does not come from the *fruit* of our labor but from the *focus* of our labor. Servant leaders focus on the fact that their labor is “*in the Lord*” and therefore has purpose beyond visible results. They have a different “bottom line.” They recognize that obedience is more important than results. The numbers matter, but servant leaders look at different statistics. They look at the quality of the fruit of the Spirit in their life and the ways they are walking more closely to the Lord.

Does this mean that results are unimportant? Of course not! Leaders desire positive results, and God is concerned with numbers. But leaders lose their focus if they measure only results and forget that they are leading for Jesus. Do you measure success by obedience or results?

Leading with purpose produces perseverance. Paul challenges us, “*Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.*” He is saying, keep going through the good times and the bad. Don’t let the economic downturn change your focus. Don’t measure your value by the size of your following. Don’t let your net worth determine your self worth. Servant leaders are able to persevere in their work because they are leading with

6. Leading With Purpose

purpose. Are you able to persevere even when you don't see results?

Whether you're facing intense financial challenges, disheartening statistics, declining numbers or rejectionkeep going, you are leading with a purpose. It is not in vain!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Do I find my value from the numbers and results of my leadership, or from Jesus?

2. What happens deep inside me when the numbers are down and the results are not what I desired?

How do I find strength to keep going?

3. How can I measure the fruit that God desires in my life?

Are these fruits increasing?



7. LEADERS WITH A LIMP

A friend of mine sat in my office and said something I'll never forget. He leaned forward in his chair and said with intense feeling, "Don't follow a leader without a limp." For months afterwards, I reflected on the implications of his powerful statement.

The analogy of leading with a limp comes from the life of Jacob. The origin of his limp is recorded in Genesis 32. After many years of separation, Jacob was returning home to his brother Esau and did not know if Esau would welcome him or attack him in anger.

That night, Jacob wrestled alone with God. In the encounter, God touched Jacob on his hip, and from that point on he walked with a limp, a visible sign of a spiritual encounter with God that transformed his life and changed his name to Israel.

My friend's statement indicated that it is dangerous to follow a leader who has not had such an encounter with God. He recognized that leaders without a limp harm those they lead. As servant leaders, what are the marks that show we are leaders with a limp?

Leaders with a limp acknowledge their deep need for God. Before Jacob wrestled with God, he found ways

to do everything on his own. He had little need for God's daily guidance in his life. But after meeting God his agenda changed. He recognized in a new way that God's plans were bigger than his schemes. He recognized that his own strength was not enough for the challenges ahead. He desperately wanted to know God and begged to hear God's name. *Jacob said, "Please tell me your name"* (Genesis 32:29). Leaders are usually seen as strong, self-sufficient persons who are lifted high in the eyes of others. But leaders with a limp recognize their own humanity and admit their deep need for God. They are able to acknowledge that they also need a team of others around them to help carry out the vision.

Leaders with a limp live their lives on God's agenda.

Jacob, prior to wrestling with God, was a self-sufficient leader filled with his own schemes and plans to achieve his own purposes. He was in charge of his own agenda. But the night with God changed all that as Jacob recognized that God's purposes for him were bigger than he had imagined. He recognized that his life was a gift from God and God's plan was far greater than the flocks of sheep Jacob had obtained. Leaders who lead with a limp have surrendered their own ambitions and dreams to the role God has for them. They have surrendered selfish ambitions in order to live for God's purposes. They recognize that the influence God has given them in their business, church, family and community is a gift for which they will be held accountable.

Leaders with a limp seek the approval of God, not the applause of men. As Jacob wrestled, he desperately sought God's blessing on his life. *Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."* But Jacob replied, *"I will not let you go unless you bless me"* (Genesis 32:26). His heart had turned from seeking the applause of self and others to seeking only the approval of God. Every leader will struggle with the desire for affirmation, and we all are

7. Leaders With A Limp

human enough to enjoy praise from others. But servant leaders lead seeking only God's approval.

Leaders with a limp extend grace to others. After Jacob walked with a limp, he showed greater compassion to others. His original plan was to send others ahead of himself to meet his brother Esau. He was going to put his family in danger and then follow in a safer position! But after his encounter with God, he took the lead and allowed others to follow in a safer position. He was able to show compassion and grace to others. Leaders who have not wrestled with God use others for their own advantage, but those who walk with a limp serve others. They have received forgiveness and can then extend grace to others. They no longer look down on weaknesses in others and treat those who make mistakes as failures. Servant leaders who walk with a limp are able to show grace to others on the journey.

Wherever you are in your leadership journey, take a few minutes to reflect on Jacob's story and ask God to make you a leader with a limp!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Have I had a time of ‘wrestling’ with God that transformed my life?

What is the result?

2. In the past six weeks, in what way have I showed my own need for God?

3. How do I treat ‘weak’ people in my organization (business or church)?

4. Is there any evidence in my leadership that I lead to fulfill God’s agenda, not my own?

Would others agree?

5. When faced with a difficult decision that will not please the people I lead, how do I decide what to do?

What does this indicate about my motives?



8. DANIEL: A MORAL RESOLVE

How is it possible to serve well as leaders for over 60 years? In the next chapters we'll look at the life of Daniel, a leader who served for a lifetime with excellence. He accomplished this as an Israelite captive in Babylon, a very challenging environment. He was away from home, serving with no choice and with little hope of freedom. Few leaders would choose a situation like this in which to serve. Yet Daniel is one of very few biblical characters without recorded flaws, and servant leaders can learn much from his example.

The first glimpse of Daniel's excellence comes quickly in his story with four simple words, "*But Daniel resolved not...*" (Daniel 1:8). He resolved not to eat the food and wine offered by the king of Babylon. His commitment may also be translated as "purposed in his heart." Whatever the language, Daniel had a moral resolve that served as a compass for his life and leadership. Resolve is not a word we use often, perhaps because it is so strong. It means to make a firm decision, something which is not taken lightly. Daniel's example helps servant leaders understand what it means to have moral resolve.

Moral resolve is not situational. Daniel faced his first leadership challenge far away from his homeland. He was out of his familiar world facing an uncertain future. He had just been assigned a new name and was beginning a three year training program that would determine his future. The pressure to conform in this situation was enormous, but Daniel had a moral compass that enabled him to say “No.” He recognized that a new location did not change right and wrong and that there is no such thing as ‘situational ethics.’ Servant leaders recognize that moral absolutes do not change with the situation.

Moral resolve is predetermined. Daniel was able to stick to his principles because he had decided before the time of testing what he would and would not do. At some point in his leadership journey he had resolved what principles would guide his life. Too many leaders wait until they are in a moment of trial to decide what to do. At that point, it is very difficult to choose the right direction. Servant leaders determine their values before they are tested and resolve to uphold them.

Moral resolve establishes priorities. Daniel’s resolve allowed him to set clear priorities. He knew the major issues for which he would not compromise. He did not object when he was given a new name and he did not protest when he was asked to study Babylonian history and language. But he drew a line on the issue of food which would have caused him to be ‘defiled.’ While we may not fully understand the principles involved in Daniel’s decision, all servant leaders think carefully about what values they will guard most carefully.

Moral resolve supersedes consequences. Daniel was certainly aware that his decision would have consequences. As we will see in the next chapter, he sought the best possible outcomes, but his moral resolve was based solely on what he understood to be right and wrong. He refused to make his decision based on his chances of success. Servant

8. Daniel: A Moral Resolve

leaders with moral resolve do what is right regardless of the cost.

Daniel began his leadership journey with a clear declaration of his moral resolve. Let's follow his example and make our own resolutions!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Are there examples from my leadership of times when I showed, or failed to show, moral resolve?

What was the result and what, if anything, would I do differently if I could repeat those choices?

2. In what circumstances am I most tempted to compromise my principles?

What can I learn from Daniel's example that could help me to avoid compromise?

3. Action: Write a short list of your own leadership resolutions. Include several "I will not..." and several "I will always..." Take a week to reflect on the list and make any changes needed. Then, share your resolutions with another leader.



9. DANIEL: APPEALING TO AUTHORITY

Our first lesson from Daniel's life was his resolve not to be defiled; he lived with a moral compass that would not be moved. But his moral resolve quickly brings Daniel into conflict with the king's plans and leads to his first leadership challenge. *"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way"* (Daniel 1:8). This was not an easy situation for Daniel. Remember that he was a captive in a foreign land without power or titles. He could not resign and look for another job! This was not a democracy; he served under a king whose law was absolute. Disobedience was punishable by death. Yet his conscience would not allow him to obey the king's command. He could have chosen to compromise his beliefs, try to run away from the situation, or simply refuse to obey.

Daniel didn't choose any of these options. Rather, he appealed to authority. His response teaches all servant leaders how to appropriately appeal to those in authority when faced with an issue of conscience. He did several things which gave his appeal the greatest possible chance to

change the instruction of the king.

The appeal was made in the right spirit. Daniel's attitude is remarkable. He "asked" permission; he didn't demand anything. He showed respect to the official and the king in all that he said and proposed. He recognized the authority of the official and submitted to the outcomes. Servant leaders who need to appeal check their hearts before opening their mouths. They approach their leader in the right spirit.

The appeal considered the authority's needs. Daniel's appeal indicates that he was aware of and had seriously considered the king's desire. The king wanted healthy officials. Daniel recognized this goal and offered an alternative solution which would meet the same goal while honoring his own principles. He proposes a 10 day test that will allow the goals of the king to be balanced with his own conscience. When leaders are faced with a difficult issue it is easy to think only about what they want as a leader and how to get it. But Daniel demonstrates that servant leaders genuinely care about the goals of the other and seeks a solution that will help both of them.

The appeal was left with the authority. *"Then....treat your servants in accordance with what you see"* (Daniel 1:13). Daniel had already made his own decision about whether or not to eat the king's food; he had *"resolved not to defile himself."* But he recognized that what would happen to him was also in the hand of the king. He recognized the authority of the king to make a final decision about the matter. Servant leaders recognize that their appeal will not always be accepted. They recognize that the authority over them has the power to accept or reject the appeal and this helps the servant leader to appeal with the right spirit.

The appeal was based on God's favor. *"Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel"* (Daniel 1:9). Daniel had the right spirit and did all the right

9. Daniel: Appealing To Authority

things in his appeal, but he clearly acknowledges that the outcome would be based on God's favor. Servant leaders don't depend on their own wisdom, but seek the favor of God.

Daniel's appeal succeeded and everyone benefited as a result. But even if his request would have been denied, the way he appealed is a great model. Following his example provides servant leaders with the best possible chance of their appeal being considered.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. When did I face a situation that involved an issue of conscience for me?

Did I appeal to the authority?

If I did not, what guided my decision and what was the outcome?

If I did appeal:

- What was the attitude of my heart towards the person in authority?
- What was the goal of the person in authority and how well did my appeal consider that goal?
- How well did I leave the decision to the person in authority?
- In what ways did I experience God's favor?
- In retrospect, what could I have done differently that might have brought better results?

9. Daniel: Appealing To Authority

2. If Daniel would have simply refused, if he had just said, “No, I cannot eat the food,” in what way might the outcome have been different?

3. Is there a situation I am currently facing that would require me to compromise?

If so, reflect on each of the ways Daniel made his appeal.

What would it mean in my situation if I took each of the steps Daniel took?



10. DANIEL: MARKETPLACE LEADERSHIP

Servant leadership is an inside job, but it will show on the outside in the way we do our work in the marketplace. Daniel already demonstrated his character and ability to wisely appeal to authority, but he also demonstrates competence in his service to the king. When it was time for the final exam, the king found ‘*none equal*’ to Daniel and his three Hebrew friends. They were rated “*ten times better*” than their counterparts (Daniel 1:19-20). At other points in Daniel’s story it is equally clear that he did outstanding work.

“Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent” (Daniel 6:3-4).

Daniel was not a pastor or church leader; he was a government official and served in this ‘marketplace’ in a

way that demonstrates how servant leaders influence in and through their vocations.

Servant leaders influence the marketplace with their comprehension. Daniel and his friends stood out from the rest because they had “*wisdom and understanding*” that was “*ten times better*” than the rest (Daniel 1:20). This knowledge was a gift from God (see Daniel 1:17), but they had also studied hard in three years of training and were now able to influence the nation because of their exceptional understanding. They knew their job well! Servant leaders recognize “*The earth is the LORD’s*” (Psalms 24:1) and their vocation is simply a place where God has called them to influence others for His purposes. They make an effort to be knowledge leaders in their field, learning all they can in an effort to better reflect God’s presence. They ask God for greater knowledge in their area of influence; not to impress others or advance their own cause, but to honor God in what they do. Farmers learn all they can about agriculture; business leaders seek to better understand leadership and the area of service in which God has placed them. Teachers continually seek more effective methods to increase learning. When servant leaders excel, others are impacted and God is exalted. How well does your vocational knowledge glorify God?

Servant leaders influence the marketplace with their character. Even Daniel’s enemies could not identify a character flaw in his life. He was “trustworthy” and without “corruption.” This was all the more remarkable because he lived and served in Babylon, a city known for its corruption. The darker the place in which servant leaders work, the brighter their light of integrity shines. Daniel impacted his peers because of his character. How well does your character reflect God’s nature in your profession?

Servant leaders influence the marketplace with their care. Daniel was not “negligent” in any aspect of his work. He was careful about his role and responsibilities. He paid

10. Daniel: Marketplace Leadership

attention to the details, fulfilling his role with excellence. Servant leaders are not careless; they focus on doing their very best to reflect God's nature. How well does your attention to excellence in the marketplace influence others?

Lead like Daniel today in the place you are called to serve, your marketplace!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Reflect on the three questions from this chapter. For each question, rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 and then indicate what steps you could take to increase your influence in that area.
2. How well does my vocational knowledge glorify God?
3. How well does my character at work reflect God's nature?
4. How well does my attention to excellence in the marketplace influence others?
5. What Christian leader do I admire in my vocation and why?

Action: Take a minute to write a note or email of thanks to that person for their impact in your life.



11. DANIEL: SPEAKING WITH WISDOM AND TACT

It was a matter of life and death. The executioners were searching for Daniel to kill him. The king earlier had a dream and ordered his astrologers to both tell him the dream and provide the interpretation. When they declared that the task was impossible, the king ordered all the wise men, including Daniel and his three friends, to be killed. How would you respond in a similar situation where your life was on the line? Many leaders would respond with anger and defensiveness or simply run in the other direction. But Daniel chose another path.

When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel (Daniel 2:14-15). Daniel responded "with wisdom and tact" and teaches servant leaders to do the same.

Daniel spoke with wisdom. Wisdom is the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement, knowing what should be done in a situation. Daniel, in a wise manner, spoke when others were silent and knew what

to speak. He wisely asked for more information from Arioch, the commander. Before making any statement, he asked, *“Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?”* Daniel was genuinely seeking to understand the situation more completely. Without understanding he could not know what action would be appropriate. After hearing the response from Arioch, Daniel took another step of going to the king to ask for time to interpret the dream. Then he called his friends for prayer. Daniel’s speech and actions reflect a calm, steady, and wise approach, even in this dangerous time. Servant leaders know what to speak; they speak with wisdom.

Daniel spoke with tact. Tact is the ability to say something with appropriate sensitivity in a manner that avoids giving unnecessary offense. Daniel recognized that he needed to not only be wise but to speak with great care. Tensions were running high and people were going to die. A slip of the tongue at this point or a provocative word could have proven fatal. He did not attack the commander or accuse him of any wrongdoing but tactfully kept the door open for further dialogue. He went to the king and made a simple but clear request, and the king responded by giving him time. Daniel showed a clear sense of what was appropriate to say in this situation. Servant leaders know how to speak; they speak with tact.

Daniel spoke with both wisdom and tact. Daniel combined both wisdom and tact in his speech. He recognized that wisdom alone was not enough; he needed to speak in a manner that would diffuse the situation and allow a solution. Tact alone would also not have worked. He might have spoken tactfully but without knowing what needed to be done. Wisdom without tact would have caused offense and made the situation worse. Tact without wisdom would have avoided offense, but not moved the situation to a resolution. Wisdom and tact together produced a solution. By speaking with wisdom and tact, Daniel not only saved

11. Daniel: Speaking With Wisdom And Tact

his own life, but the lives of many others as well. Servant leaders know what to speak and the right way to speak it.

Lead today by speaking only with wisdom and tact!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. When did my mouth get me into trouble?

From Daniel's example, what could I have done differently?

2. Mathew 12:34 says, "*For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*" When my mouth gets me into trouble, what does it indicate about my heart?

3. How often do I offer my opinion before asking questions?

Action: Ask a close friend to give you his/her answer to this question about you.

What is God inviting me to do to change?

4. Do I more often speak with wisdom or tact?

How can I move towards combining both?



12. DANIEL: GIVING CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

The king ordered Daniel's death, but after speaking to the king's messenger with "wisdom and tact," Daniel called his friends together and urged them to pray that God would reveal the king's dream. With their lives hanging in the balance, God answered their prayers and revealed the dream to Daniel. He responded to this revelation with heartfelt worship and praise to God (see Daniel 2:19-23) and then went to tell the king the dream and the meaning. *The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries"* (Daniel 2:26-28a). Most leaders would have responded to the king's question by saying boldly, "Yes I can tell you the dream and what it means!" But Daniel refused to take any credit for interpreting the king's dream. His humble response instructs all servant leaders how to give credit where credit is due.

Servant leaders credit God for their gifts. Daniel was a talented leader who was the best in his training program.

From the beginning of his story, everyone could see that he was gifted, especially in the area of interpreting dreams and visions (see Daniel 1:17). He could have easily taken credit for these gifts when he responded to the king. Instead he quickly acknowledged that his ability to interpret dreams was not his own. Servant leaders are grateful for the gifts God has given them. They use their education and life experience to become even more skilled at what they do. But when they succeed, they give God credit for their successes as Daniel did. When they look at how many followers they have, how much profit they have made, how many people work for them, or other recognitions of accomplishments, they refuse to take the glory. Proud leaders say, “Look at what I have done!” while servant leaders say “Look at what God has done.”

Servant leaders credit God for their position. As a result of interpreting the dream, Daniel was elevated to an even higher position (Daniel 2:48). But Daniel realized clearly that positions are given by God who “*sets up kings and deposes them*” (Daniel 2:21). Daniel models the way for all servant leaders to recognize that whatever position they hold is a gift from God who can grant a position for a season or for a lifetime. Servant leaders acknowledge that they are in positions because of God’s plan, not because of their own abilities. Proud leaders say “Look where I have reached!” while servant leaders say, “Look where God has placed me.”

Servant leaders credit God for their influence. Daniel recognized that God placed him in a position to influence one of the most powerful men on earth. Many leaders would be impressed with themselves and quickly let others know who they met for dinner! But Daniel told the king, “*As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind*” (Daniel 2:30).

12. Daniel: Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

He acknowledged that God wanted to influence the king through him, and he was grateful for the opportunity. Proud leaders say, “Look at who I influenced!” while servant leaders say “I’m grateful that God allowed me to influence.”

Successful leaders will be tempted to take credit for their achievements and to pass the blame to others when they fail. Daniel teaches us how to give credit where credit is due...and that is always to God!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Read Daniel's response of praise to God in Daniel 2:19-23. What does his prayer teach me about giving credit to God?
2. Reflect on the ways I have been successful as a leader.

How am I tempted to take credit for these successes?

Where did I get the strength, the ideas, the vision, the resources?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:7. What does this verse teach me about my success or what I have?

3. What gifts, positions, and influence has God given me?

Do those around me see me giving God credit for these?



13. DANIEL: BRINGING OTHERS ON THE JOURNEY

It was time for a promotion! The king was so impressed by Daniel's ability to interpret his dream that he, *"placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men"* (Daniel 2:48). What a great reward! For many leaders, the story would end with this as they enjoy the fruit of their leadership. But Daniel was not an ordinary leader, and the story continues: *"Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court"* (Daniel 2:49).

Daniel's action reveals that servant leaders don't just take a journey; they bring others with them on the journey! He was not satisfied to travel alone or to take all the credit for what God had done. So, at Daniel's request, the king appointed his three friends to administrative positions. Daniel brought his friends along on the journey because he saw four things.

Daniel saw position as opportunity to influence. Daniel didn't take a lot of time enjoying the gifts of the

king. Rather, he recognized that his promotion was simply another opportunity to be a blessing to more people, first to his teammates and then to the nation. His first request of the king was the promotion of his three friends. Servant leaders continually recognize that God places them in positions of influence to advance God's purposes in the world. Whether the servant leader owns a business, serves as church leader, leads a family, classroom or school, the leader sees the position as an opportunity for influence.

Daniel saw his victory as a team victory. Daniel was clearly the leader, but he was not alone. He had a team. His victory was a team victory. The book is named for him but Daniel was not alone. Before the dream was revealed, Daniel asked his three friends to join him in fervent prayer and God answered their prayers. Daniel alone went to interpret the dream, but he remembered that others also played a part in the success, and he would not leave the rest behind when he was promoted. Servant leaders freely acknowledge the role others play in their success and see every victory as a team victory.

Daniel saw the gifts of others. Daniel was gifted and in many ways ahead of everyone else. He clearly had the gift of interpreting dreams. Still, he recognized that others also had gifts. He asked for an opportunity for his teammates to lead because he saw past his own gift to see theirs. They had also been trained in the same program as Daniel and were apparently gifted in administration. Many leaders focus on their own giftedness. It is obviously good to develop one's own gifts, but the best leaders seek to recognize and affirm the gifts of others. Servant leaders focus on others, and Daniel challenges each of us to look around us and see the giftedness of those on our team.

Daniel saw that power was to be shared. Some leaders grasp power for themselves and fight others to get as much power as they can. They see power as a limited resource and want to get as much as possible. Daniel, as a

13. Daniel: Bringing Others On The Journey

servant leader, saw power as something to be shared and knew that sharing power would not diminish his own worth. He would remain “at the royal court” as the second in command. Servant leaders lend a helping hand to developing leaders. They pull others higher by sharing power. In doing so, the servant leader is not reducing their influence but rather increasing it! Servant leaders recognize that power shared is power multiplied.

Follow Daniel’s example and find others to bring with you on your leadership journey!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. In what way has God provided opportunities for me to influence in my current position?
2. Who assisted me in reaching my current leadership role?

How can I express my appreciation to them and acknowledge the role they played in my development?

3. What recent victory have I experienced in my leadership?

Who else played a role in my success?

What should I do to acknowledge their contribution?

13. Daniel: Bringing Others On The Journey

4. What gifts does each other person on my team possess?

In what ways could I encourage the development of these gifts?

5. In what practical ways can I share my power with others this week?

What will happen in my leadership as I empower others?



14. DANIEL: SERVING WITH PURE MOTIVES

Some years after Daniel's first interpretation of a dream for Nebuchadnezzar, the king's son, Belshazzar, also needed a wise man to tell him the meaning of a light which had appeared on his wall and written a message. The king calls Daniel to interpret the message (Daniel 5:1-17).

"Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom." Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means" (Daniel 5:16-17).

Daniel's answer reveals a lot about his heart and motives. The king offered Daniel rewards that would be a powerful motivation to most leaders. But Daniel, as a servant leader, had different motives and told the king to keep his gifts. The gifts he refused showed three areas that did not motivate him to lead.

Daniel was not motivated by power. The king offered to clothe Daniel in purple, the color of royalty, a symbol of the power wielded by the king. The offer of power and authority motivates many leaders and stirs in all of us the universal urge to be in control.

Servant leaders accept power for the purpose of accomplishing what God has called them to do, but they do not seek it. Servant leaders instead are motivated by love for those they serve and use power to bless those under their leadership. Many leaders use power for their own benefit; servant leaders use power to bless others.

Daniel was not motivated by prestige. The king promised a gold chain around Daniel's neck. Gold chains serve only to impress others with the importance of the one who wears them. The prestige of leadership motivates many leaders who are eager to impress others with what they wear, the value of their vehicle, or their title and rank. They enjoy the perks of leadership including special food, privileges, and the admiration of followers. Many leaders are motivated by what others think; servant leaders seek only to please God who called them to be leaders.

Daniel was not motivated by position. The king offered Daniel a high position, third highest in the land. Many leaders spend their lives trying to climb to higher positions and want to get as close to the top as possible. But Daniel didn't find the offer particularly appealing. He recognized that God elevates people to positions and that positions can be lost as quickly as they are gained. Servant leaders don't seek positions; rather they focus on how to influence as much and as many as possible for God's purposes. They hold positions lightly and do their part with or without a position. Many leaders have their eye on the position; servant leaders have their eye on the people.

Daniel was not motivated by these common incentives. His eyes were focused on other things. But he still did what he was requested to do and interpreted the dream.

14. Daniel: Serving With Pure Motives

Ironically, he still received all three gifts promised by the king (see Daniel 5:29). But, they lasted less than 24 hours when a new king took the throne! Daniel recognized the temporary nature of these motivations and shows all servant leaders how to check our hearts for the ‘why’ of what we are doing. Most leaders focus on the action; Daniel reminds us to check our motives. For servant leaders the motive is as important as the action.



For further reflection and discussion:

Take a moment to think of your current position of leadership. Focus on why you do what you do as you reflect on the following questions:

1. What power do I hold in my leadership?

How does this power impact my heart?

Are there any ways that I am tempted to use my power for my own advantage instead of for building up others?

2. What prestige do I receive because of my leadership? (Think of special privileges, benefits, titles, and deference given by others.)

In what ways do I see these as my rights rather than privileges?

Do I allow these things to cause me to look down on those ‘under’ my leadership?

14. Daniel: Serving With Pure Motives

3. Of what importance to me is my position?

If I lost my position today, would I continue doing as much as possible to continue influencing others for God's kingdom?



15. DANIEL: LEADING WITH EXCELLENCE

Daniel correctly interpreted the handwriting on the wall only hours before a new ruler, Darius, overthrew the kingdom. Daniel was one of three highest leaders in the new government and led with such excellence that the king was ready to promote him. This provoked jealousy among his colleagues and they tried in every way to find fault with Daniel.

Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God” (Daniel 6:3-5).

Daniel led with such “exceptional qualities” that although they looked hard they couldn’t find anything wrong! Daniel’s faith was clearly evident in his work.

Servant leaders can learn to lead with excellence in their vocation as Daniel did.

Daniel led with excellence by being trustworthy.

Daniel was worthy of the trust placed in him as a key leader of the nation. Kings trust very few people but Daniel earned his confidence by the life that he lived. Trust is earned by consistently displaying solid character for a long time. Without trust, a leader cannot lead. Even Daniel's enemies admitted that he was trustworthy. Servant leaders earn the trust of those around them.

Daniel led with excellence by resisting corruption.

Daniel lived and served in an empire known for corruption, but his colleagues could not find any evidence of corruption in his leadership. Daniel certainly faced many opportunities to use his office for personal gain and many people were willing to pay for favors. But Daniel could not be bought or bribed. His expense accounts were accurate, his financial reports were clean. His decisions were not biased by finances. Servant leaders do not reflect their environment; they shape it as they resist corruption, like Daniel.

Daniel led with excellence by working hard. It would be very easy for Daniel to begin to enjoy the privileges of high office and spend his time eating and drinking at the expense of his duties. He had subordinates who could do the work while he relaxed. But Daniel did his job with excellence and didn't neglect any aspect of his responsibilities. Servant leaders, whether in a high or low position, are willing to work hard and complete all aspects of their role with excellence.

Daniel led with excellence by revealing his faith.

Daniel's enemies finally concluded that the only way to bring him down was to make his faith illegal! They proceeded to change the law and the result was Daniel in the lion's den. We often focus more on the story of the lions than the reasons he faced them. Daniel was thrown to

15. Daniel: Leading With Excellence

the lions because the excellence of his work revealed his faith. Daniel was not preaching his faith in church; his life of faith was very evident in his workplace. Servant leaders express their faith in what they do every day; they put their faith to work!

We desperately need leaders like Daniel in every vocation and at every level of society, men and women who lead with excellence at what they do and whose only ‘fault’ is their faith in God. Let’s each renew our commitment to serve with excellence as we show our faith in how we work.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. If my colleagues set out to try to find fault in my work, how long would it take them to find something wrong?

What would they discover when they looked closely at how I spend my time, handle money, speak to others, represent my organization to others, treat those under me, or talk about those in authority?

2. In my vocation, how is corruption expressed? (Think of how people use position and power to influence wrongly. This may not always be with money.)

In what ways am I personally most tempted to compromise my integrity?

15. Daniel: Leading With Excellence

3. Is there any part of my role as a leader that is currently being neglected?

Are there other things on which I am spending more time than I should which cause this task to be neglected?

If so, what is God inviting me to do to complete this task?

4. Is my commitment to Christ the only fault others can find with my life?

If others went through all my possessions, checked my email accounts and computer history, dug through my financial records, checked my tax returns and talked to my neighbors, would they find anything for which I am to blame?



16. DANIEL: LEADING ON HIS KNEES

Daniel's enemies could find no fault with his excellent job performance or integrity, so they looked at his regular prayer as a potential trap. They appealed to the king's pride and persuaded him to outlaw Daniel's prayer. They expected that he would either die or compromise. Either way, his enemies concluded, they would win. Daniel was again in a crisis. His faith in God and his role with the king seemed to be in direct opposition. With his life on the line, what would he do?

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help (Daniel 6:10-11).

In this time of crisis, Daniel chose to lead from his knees and encourages all servant leaders to pray as he did.

He prayed frequently. Three times a day, Daniel stopped and prayed. Prayer was the central part of Daniel's day and the source of his strength as a leader. While

Daniel's pattern is not a prescription for all leaders, every leader would do well to begin and end the day with prayer and to pause in the midst of the day for a time to center their life again on the One who calls them to lead. Prayer was the anchor of Daniel's day. Servant leaders pause frequently to seek God's direction for their life and leadership.

He prayed consistently. Daniel prayed "*Just as he had done before.*" Daniel could easily have rationalized that if he stopped praying for thirty days, God would surely understand! But for Daniel, prayer was not something that he did when it was convenient or when there was a special need; it was his regular habit. His prayer was not only for crisis management; it was an integral part of his life and leadership. It was his prayer before the crisis that helped him make it through the crisis. Some leaders pray only when they are in a crisis; Daniel continued to pray in his crisis. It's not uncommon for leaders to cry out to God when there's trouble, but servant leaders pray consistently. They allow the regular discipline of prayer to build and strengthen their heart.

He prayed publically. Daniel's prayer life was a private part of his life, but it was also on display for all to see. His prayer was intensely private but evident to all. He was not making a public display to be seen, but he was certainly not ashamed of his life of prayer. Daniel could easily have justified closing the windows to the eyes of those intending to do harm to him, but he boldly continued praying openly. His enemies had no problem finding evidence that he was continuing to pray despite the king's command. Servant leaders are not ashamed to acknowledge their need for prayer and their practice of prayer. They continue to pray when others are watching; in restaurants, on planes, at home, and in the boardroom.

He prayed thankfully. "*Giving thanks to God, just as he had done before.*" Daniel was certainly, "*asking God*

16. Daniel: Leading On His Knees

for help,” but he first gave thanks. This was his habit, and even when his life was at risk, he paused to thank God. It’s not easy to be continually thankful, especially when others are after our lives! But Daniel found strength in reflecting on God’s goodness to him. Perhaps he thanked God for the opportunity he had enjoyed to serve in the king’s employ for the days he had. Servant leaders give thanks as they pray.

Servant leaders learn from Daniel to kneel before they stand. The source of their leadership strength is a bended knee. They bow to God before expecting others to bow to them or follow their leadership. When they rise from prayer, they have joined their hearts with the One who called them to lead and the One who gives the wisdom and courage they so desperately need. They lead from their knees.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. If you don't know what happened after Daniel's prayer, read the rest of the story in Daniel 6! What does this teach me about prayer?

2. The passage we examined provides only a brief glimpse into Daniel's life of prayer. Read and reflect on Daniels prayer in Daniel 9. What do I learn from his prayer that can help me as a leader?

3. Evaluate your own prayer life in light of the ways that Daniel prayed:
 - Frequently.
How often do I pray?

Does prayer provide the anchor for my day?

How often do I begin my day with prayer?

How often do I end the day with prayer?

How often do I pray in the middle of the day?

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- Consistently.

Is my prayer life consistent or only active in times of crisis?

What is the result?

- Publically.

Is my prayer life open enough that others can see it?

Are there situations in which I am afraid to pray openly?

What in my heart needs to change?

- Thankfully.

Are my prayers heavily flavored with thanksgiving?

How much of my prayers are thanksgivings and how much are requests?

4. What is God inviting me to do this week in response to Daniel's example of leading on his knees?



17. DANIEL: A STEWARD OF DREAMS

Daniel's story is filled with dreams beginning with his training in the king's service to excel in the interpretation of dreams. "*And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds*" (Daniel 1:17). As his life story develops, Daniel interprets two dreams for Nebuchadnezzar and the handwriting on the wall for King Belshazzar. Then, in the final chapters of the book, Daniel himself receives four additional dreams from God. These are explained in great detail and have been the object of much study and interpretation. I will not attempt to explain the meanings of these dreams, but will reflect instead on what Daniel's experience can teach us as servant leaders about being stewards of God's dreams. A steward is one entrusted by another to care for his property or affairs. God gives servant leaders dreams and Daniel shows us what to do with them.

Servant leaders receive God's dreams as stewards. In Daniel's story, the dreams revealed what God was going to do in the future; they were a glimpse of what was ahead for the nation or the world. In the final chapters, Daniel's visions concerned the end of time. All of these dreams were

given to Daniel by God and were received by Daniel as a steward. What helped Daniel to receive these dreams? Receiving God's dream requires *attentiveness*. Daniel listened. He fasted and prayed before receiving some of the visions God entrusted to him. Receiving God's dream also requires *trustworthiness*. In Daniel 10:11 the angel says that Daniel is "*highly esteemed*." As we have already seen, Daniel's life and character were blameless. So God could trust Daniel with His dreams!

While we may not see visions in our sleep, all leaders dream! They envision a future in a way that energizes them to move forward. Many leaders talk about their vision for the future, but it is usually a dream that comes from their own mind and will primarily benefit themselves. Servant leaders intentionally seek to find God's dream for their lives and leadership. They seek to know what God has specifically called them to do and the direction God has for the group they lead. When they see this dream, they act not as owners of the dream but as stewards who are accountable to God for the dream. What are the dreams God has for your life? For the group you lead? Have you taken time to receive God's dream? Can He trust you as a faithful steward of His vision for the future?

Servant leaders respond to God's dreams as stewards. Daniel not only received God's dreams, he responded obediently to them. Sometimes this meant that he shared the interpretation with the King. At other times, he called for action. "*Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed*" (Daniel 4:27).

In one instance, Daniel recognized the dream God had for his nation, and based on this knowledge, Daniel turned to God with fasting and prayer that the vision would be accomplished (see Daniel 9:1-3). Daniel didn't stop with a dream; he woke up and worked with God to bring the

17. Daniel: A Steward Of Dreams

dream to pass. What is God's dream for the future of your group? Daniel's glimpse into the future should stir us to action.

"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

God's dream for our future is that in whatever role we serve as leaders, we will *"lead many to righteousness."* Who are those God is calling you to lead in this way? Will you receive the dream and respond in obedience? Servant leaders seek God's direction for the role He wants them to play to accomplish the dream. Then they act as stewards to fulfill God's dreams.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Reflect on your own dreams for the future. To what extent are these dreams from God and not simply to benefit me?

What difference does this make in how I share the vision with others?

2. How attentive am I to hear God's dreams for my arena of influence?

What can I do to be more attentive?

3. Does my life and leadership exhibit a trustworthy character which encourages God to reveal more of His dreams to me?

What steps can I take to increase my trustworthiness?

17. Daniel: A Steward Of Dreams

4. What specific dreams has God given to me for the group I lead?

Have these dreams stirred me to action?

What steps is God inviting me to take in sharing this dream with others and leading them to accomplish the dream?

5. Reflect on Daniel 12:3, *“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”* In what way is my leadership leading *“many to righteousness”*?



18. ACT LIKE PAUL: MODEL THE WAY

What are common actions that the best leaders do well?* In the next five chapters we'll look at specific actions that all effective leaders do well, and reflect on how Paul demonstrated the way servant leaders act in these areas. The first of these actions is to model the way. The best leaders don't just *tell* people what to do; they *show* them what to do. Effective leadership begins with self-leadership, being the kind of person others should imitate. After all, if you aren't worth following, why should I follow you?

Examine Paul's example of modeling the way. Paul's primary passion was simply to follow Jesus, not to be a leader or a hero. But in his pursuit of following Jesus, he was a powerful example of servant leadership and greatly influenced others because of his life. In addition, he also intentionally modeled the way for those he led and called them to imitate him. Consider Paul's bold statement, "*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ* (1 Corinthians 11:1). At first glance, this statement might seem arrogant and inappropriate for a servant leader. But Paul recognized that one way to serve those who followed

him was to be an effective model and to deliberately call them to follow his example. When he met with the Ephesian elders he carefully reminded them of how he had led them. He deliberately used his life as a model for them to follow. (Read the account in Acts 20:18-35). Essentially, Paul says that his life was a model to them. He reminds them of his message, he describes his methods, and he reveals his motives. He speaks candidly with the elders and intentionally uses his own life to challenge them to do what he has done.

Understand the Power of modeling the way. Instinctively, we all understand that people learn more from what we do than what we say. We've heard the saying, "What you are doing speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you are saying." It's true in our homes, in our vocations, in our churches and communities. But as leaders, we often forget how powerful our example is. I teach a lot on servant leadership. But those I teach have often shared with me that what impacts them more than my teaching is what they observe from my life when I serve tea or do some menial task! My primary goal in these actions is not to show others; I am simply seeking to faithfully follow Jesus in my daily life. When we model the way, people learn to trust us. They learn that we are people of integrity and consistency. When we model lives of integrity over time, people learn that our word is dependable, our promise is secure, and our heart is pure.

Accept the Call to serve by modeling the way. Paul's example calls each of us to first live a life that is a model and to ask ourselves the question "Is my life worth imitating?" If we are committed to following Jesus in all we do, our lives will naturally be a model for others. Secondly, Paul's example compels us to deliberately call others to imitate us. Servant leaders do this not to draw attention to or exalt themselves, but because they recognize how powerfully God can shape the lives of others by their

18. Act Like Paul: Model The Way

own example of a life lived well. Even when they fail, their example of repentance and change becomes a model to follow.

The example of Paul shows that modeling the way is an effective expression of servant leadership. Are you a model...and are you calling others to follow your example? Take time to reflect on the following questions to help answer these critical questions.

*Credit: The five actions which we will examine are taken from “The Leadership Challenge, 4th Edition” by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. These two authors did extensive research on leaders and concluded that these five actions were found in all effective leaders. I believe, in addition, that they are grounded in Scriptural principles.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Reflect on these additional verses from Paul's life:

1 Thessalonians 1:6

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9

2 Corinthians 8:21

Philippians 3:12, 4:9

Acts 20:18-35

Titus 2:7-8

What do I learn from these about modeling the way?

2. Is my life a model to others? Reflect on these questions:

- Are there secret sins in my life that hinder my effectiveness as a leader?
- How am I growing in my intimacy with Jesus?
- Is there a promise I made in the past month which I have not kept?
- Have I made a mistake for which I have not asked forgiveness?

18. Act Like Paul: Model The Way

- Are there ways in which I abuse my authority as a leader?
- Are there things I ask others to do that I am not doing?
- Do I have any broken relationships which I have not tried to rectify?
- Does my life exhibit more and more of the fruit of the Spirit?
- Do my leadership habits encourage others to be leaders?
- Is my conscience clear?
- Am I intentionally growing in Christlikeness?
- Am I deliberately calling others to follow my example?

3. Who should I challenge to imitate me?



19. ACT LIKE PAUL: CHALLENGE THE PROCESS

Effective leaders are never content with the way things are; they challenge the process. They refuse to accept that current reality is the best that is possible. They push themselves and encourage others to develop and grow towards a better future. Challenging the process is a mindset that creatively pushes traditional boundaries, explores new options and is willing to take risks. Servant leaders, like Paul, challenge the process to advance the Kingdom of God.

Examine Paul's example of challenging the process. Paul was not content with the way things were. He continually pushed out to accomplish new things for the Kingdom of God. His passion for reaching new areas is clearly expressed in 2 Corinthians 10:15b-16, "*Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory.*"

Paul continually pushed out to new areas, he found new ways to work with a team of disciples, he found ways to quickly establish leadership in new locations, he developed

a network of supporters, and found ways to support himself with tent-making. All of these were innovations that continue to challenge us two thousand years later. His leadership challenged the church to think in different ways and resulted in the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Gospel. Paul continually challenged the process.

Understand the power of challenging the process.

Discipleship is a call to grow and develop, to move forward and to become the persons God created us to be. Leadership is about change, taking people to higher levels. Leaders of organizations are called by God to move the organization towards God's intended purposes. Visions, by definition, are a picture of the future that includes change. Visions will not be accomplished unless a leader is willing to challenge the process. Leaders are not content with the way things are, and effectively challenge the process to produce change. Change is good, but change for the sake of change is not our goal. The goal is growth, which is change in the right direction! We are called to challenge the process and find ways to work with God to make this happen. Challenging the process is the first step towards growth and movement. Every advance is the result of someone not being satisfied with the way things are.

Accept the call to challenge the process. You are called to challenge the process! God didn't create you to passively accept the situation of your world. He created you to be a change agent in your home, business, profession, community and church. Look around prayerfully and find a problem. That's not a difficult assignment, most people can do that! But leaders see the problem and then get to work to find a solution. They ask, "What could we do about this problem?" They think critically about how to improve the situation and look for innovative ideas to deal with what others accept as normal. They recognize that there is a big difference between critical thinking and a critical spirit, and go far beyond complaining about current realities!

19. Act Like Paul: Challenge The Process

Servant leaders don't seek to challenge the process because they want to make a name for themselves, build their own organization or make money; they do it because they realize deep in their heart that God Himself is not satisfied with the way things are. They understand that God's heart grieves over the broken condition of the world. He is not satisfied with the fact that 2 billion still wait to hear about His love. He is not content to watch my neighbor's marriage break, or my friend lose his home. Again and again God has intervened in the affairs of the world to bring change and hope where there was only darkness. Every time a servant leader raises a voice to say "There must be a better way" they reflect this heart of God. Act like a leader and challenge the process!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Think about the leadership of Jesus. In what ways did He challenge the process?

2. Take 10 minutes to think about your area of leadership (home, work, community, etc.). Where is God not content with the way things are?

What can I do to move forward in that area?

3. Reflect on the group you lead by asking the following questions (or discuss them with your group) :
 - On a scale of 1 to 10 how much do we challenge the process as a group?
 - What could we do to critically evaluate our results? (Are we willing to really measure our success or failure to reach God's goals for our group?)

19. Act Like Paul: Challenge The Process

- What one problem do we face in our group?
 - What could be solutions to this problem? (Make a conscious choice not to evaluate any ideas at this stage, just get them out!)
 - Are there ways we could improve what we are doing in this area?
 - What one step can we take to move forward?
4. Does my leadership encourage risk-taking by myself and others?

Why or why not?



20. ACT LIKE PAUL: INSPIRE A SHARED VISION

Leaders are people who see and have the ability to stir passion and action from others with a shared picture of the future. Servant leaders inspire groups to move towards God's ideal for the future. They see the vision and share it with others. Because of this, the Old Testament prophets who saw God's picture of the future were sometimes called 'seers.' Paul was a servant leader who saw a vision and inspired others to share it with him.

Examine Paul's example of inspiring a shared vision. Paul received a vision at the time of his dramatic conversion and his life was forever altered. *"But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel'"* (Acts 9:15). Paul immediately began to work hard to pursue the vision and quickly made a significant impact. Paul never wavered in the pursuit of his vision. His hard work could have made him a successful person, but not an exemplary leader. Leaders share the vision with others and inspire them to act as well. Paul understood this and quickly began to share his vision with others. With time he built a team of people around himself

who shared this vision and would work with him to carry it out. He involved churches who supported his work and provided regular reports to them about his progress towards the vision. By sharing his vision with a team, Paul ensured that God's vision would continue long after his own death. He was so effective at inspiring a shared vision in written form that today we join with him to carry the Gospel to those who have not yet heard. His shared vision continues to impact the world. He invested his life in sharing the vision, and the results speak for themselves.

Understand the power of inspiring a shared vision.

Vision is powerful because it looks ahead to the future in a way that provides direction and motivation for the present. It generates energy in a group. The power of leadership is to bring synergy to a group that enables them to move forward together. Without direction, people will wander around aimlessly. *"Where there is no revelation {or vision}, the people cast off restraint..."* (Proverbs 29:18). Casting off 'restraint' is also translated 'uncontrolled' and means to live without direction. Servant leaders understand that without shared vision the group they lead will not accomplish a fraction of what God intended for them to do. But when vision is shared with all members of the group, it will bring focus, direction, synergy, energy and passion. A focused group will always accomplish much more than energized individuals.

Accept the call to inspire a shared vision. Servant leaders recognize the power of a shared vision and follow Paul's example to inspire a shared vision with their followers. They don't move until they *see it*. They seek God's heart for vision, not their own dreams and ambitions. They allow the vision to deeply impact their own hearts and to stir passion within them. They are willing to invest their own lives, energy and resources to accomplish the vision. But as servants, they also recognize their own limitations, and acknowledge that God has entrusted them with both a

20. Act Like Paul: Inspire A Shared Vision

vision and a group to lead. This might be their business, a church group, a family, community or students in a classroom. The vision from God is not just a personal vision, it is meant to be shared with others. Servant leaders involve others in the vision process, they *share it*. They share it carefully, confidently and continuously. They stir passion in the hearts of those around them as they call the group to accomplish together what none of them could dream of doing alone. And they do it in a way that ensures that God receives the glory for all that happens.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. In my context, what does a group expect from the leader in terms of their own involvement in shaping the vision?

How does this impact the way I lead?

2. Do I have a clear vision of what God wants for my group?

If so, what is it?

If not, why not and how will I find it?

3. Have I communicated the vision clearly to my group?

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how passionate is my group about the vision?

What do I need to do to help them move to a higher level of passion?

20. Act Like Paul: Inspire A Shared Vision

5. Do I repeat the vision often enough and clearly enough to keep the passion level high?

Have I shared stories of the impact our effort is having?



21. ACT LIKE PAUL: EMPOWER OTHERS TO ACT

Great leaders inspire others to share the vision but also empower others to carry out the vision. They are not only capable of great accomplishments; they inspire others to greatness and empower them to act. Many leaders focus on drawing people to follow them and perhaps serve as good models but fail to bring out the best in others. The best leaders give power to others. Servant leaders like Paul give power to others so that they can develop their unique gifts and carry out God's vision.

Examine Paul's example of empowering others to act. Paul was a master at empowering others around him. He received God's vision and call alone but quickly called others around him. Paul established churches and very quickly appointed elders and leaders to care for others rather than trying to do all the work himself. He often traveled with a team of up to eight people who learned how to do the work of ministry as they traveled. As they walked with Paul they learned to preach, to train leaders, to deal with persecution and church problems. He invested in their lives, trained them deliberately and released them to serve. He chose Timothy as a young man and mentored him to

become an effective leader in the church. Paul was not threatened by the gifts of others; rather, he encouraged them to develop. He didn't keep power to himself or try to build his own empire. He gave power away as fast as possible, recognizing that leaders are called to empower others to act. It is no surprise that he wrote that the job description for leaders is "*to prepare God's people for works of service*" (Ephesians 4:12).

Understand the power of empowering others to act. Helping others to act in ways that they previously were unable to act affirms the potential of each individual. When a leader empowers others to act, he/she is encouraging that person to grow. It is an action that 'lifts the lid' in people's lives, freeing them to develop their gifts and to release their talents. Good leaders help people grow and develop; they make people feel bigger, not smaller. Servant leaders recognize that each person they serve has been created by God and called to glorify Him by what they do. They serve by releasing this potential.

Empowering others to act also shares the work and multiplies the impact. Leaders who empower others develop a team that is capable of doing far more than an individual. Followers who feel empowered by their leader are energized to do more and the impact multiplies.

Empowering others to act is more than delegating tasks, it is developing people. Since tasks need to be done, all leaders learn to delegate. But selfish leaders delegate only with the goal of getting their task accomplished; servant leaders delegate tasks to develop people. The task still gets done, but the focus is far beyond the task; it is on the person doing the task.

Accept the call to empower others to act. In whatever leadership capacity you serve, God gives you the unique opportunity to empower others to act in ways that they would not themselves believe possible. Become a 'STAR' at empowering.

21. Act Like Paul: Empower Others To Act

Select those who should be on your team and in whom you should focus your energy to empower.

Train them for whatever task it is that they are called and gifted to do. If you are not able to train them, find someone who can train them or help them find the tools they need.

Affirm them. Provide verbal encouragement which expresses your belief in them. We'll look more at this in our next chapter.

Release them. As they develop their gifts, provide more and more freedom for them to do all that God has created them to do. If they remain on your team everyone will benefit. When their growth means that they should no longer serve on your team release them and bless them! You have done your part and developed someone who will bless others.

Servant leaders not only act, they empower others to act.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Reflect on your level of security as a leader by answering the following questions. Give yourself a number on a scale of 1 to 10, and write down any thoughts that you have about your response:
 - _____ How well do I recognize the potential in others?
 - _____ How easily am I able to release tasks to others?
 - _____ How easily can I rejoice when others do better than I do?
 - _____ How willing am I to release those I have developed?
2. As a leader, am I threatened by the gifts of those around me or am I actively giving power to them?

In what ways have I acted in the past week that illustrates this?

3. When I delegate tasks, is my focus on getting the work done or developing the person doing the work?

21. Act Like Paul: Empower Others To Act

4. What persons have I identified to actively and deliberately develop?

What more can I do to empower them?

What is my plan of action with them?

5. In what way have I affirmed someone on my team this week? (If you can't recall a specific action, take a moment to do it now.)
6. Have I released those on my team in ways that feel empowering to them? (You may need to ask them this question if you want an honest answer!)



22. ACT LIKE PAUL: ENCOURAGE THE HEART

Encouragement is a tool every effective leader uses well. It meets basic human needs in those who follow and encourages full development of human potential. To ‘encourage’ is to ‘put courage in’ someone. Contrast this with ‘dis-courage’ or take away courage! Encouraging the heart is simply *the act of giving courage, confidence and hope* to an individual. Servant leaders, like Paul, recognize the power of encouraging the heart and use it to bless those they serve.

Examine Paul’s example of encouraging the heart. Paul’s leadership is filled with encouragement. Perhaps he learned it well from his dear friend Barnabas who was known as the ‘son of encouragement’ and who played such a key role in Paul’s first years as a believer. In any case, Paul encouraged people’s hearts and was a good example of his own teaching, “*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing*” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Paul encouraged people’s hearts in several ways. First, he noticed people. Many times in his writing he mentioned specific people by name. We can almost overlook the

significance of this until we recognize that Paul was a highly respected leader. To be personally recognized by someone in leadership is a great encouragement. Further, he continually focused on the positive. There were times he needed to correct and rebuke and he did it well, but the general tone of his leadership was overwhelmingly positive. He often reminded people of what they were before they met Christ, how special they were now, and the amazing future God had in store for them. He also encouraged by his words. In his writing Paul uses some form of the word encouragement over 20 times. I can only imagine how often he encouraged others beyond the written record. He challenges all servant leaders to be encouragers.

Understand the power of encouraging the heart. I need encouragement, you need encouragement, and everyone around us needs encouragement. If you could package encouragement and sell it, you wouldn't be able to keep up with the demand for your product because it meets such a basic human need. But the power of encouragement is free!

Effective leaders recognize that encouragement increases their ability to influence others. The more effectively a leader learns to be an encourager, the more powerfully he/she will be able to influence others. Selfish leaders use encouragement as a means of manipulation to get people to achieve the leader's goals. But servant leaders see encouragement as a way that they can more effectively influence others to be more like Jesus.

Encouragement empowers others to develop their full potential. Putting courage in others brings out the best in them and inspires them to act. It's a powerful act of leadership that allows servant leaders to build teams that are energized to reach God's vision for their group. They serve others with their encouragement.

Accept the call to encourage the heart. Servant leaders recognize that while encouragement is a spiritual

22. Act Like Paul: Encourage the Heart

gift given specifically to some, all leaders can become effective encouragers. They accept the challenge to grow personally to a level of maturity that allows them to focus on others instead of themselves and on the positive instead of the negative. They have eyes that see the call to encourage. They see the *need* to encourage and learn to focus on building others up. They see the *best* in people and have positive eyes. They see the *future* potential in others, not just present realities. They see the *uniqueness* of individuals and find ways to encourage that are meaningful to that person.

Servant leaders encourage others because they truly see God's potential in every other person and want to see them grow and develop. Every servant leader can develop the art of encouragement and provide followers with an injection of courage. Be encouraged and be an encourager!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. In what ways does my culture affirm or resist encouragement?
2. If I focus on encouraging others, how do I receive encouragement?
3. Do I generally spend too little time, enough time, or too much time in the area of encouragement?
4. How well do I notice people, calling them by name?

As I rise in positions of leadership do I remember to recognize, affirm and encourage those in 'lowly' positions?

5. What needs to change, if anything, in my schedule to practice encouragement?

22. Act Like Paul: Encourage the Heart

6. Think of a specific person you can encourage.

What good things do you see in their lives?

Where have you seen them growing or changing?

What loving act have you seen them do recently?

In what way has their life challenged you to be a better person?

Now act...encourage them! Do it with a note, with public affirmation, or in another way that will be meaningful to them.



23. LEADERSHIP NUGGETS FROM EPHESIANS: IDENTITY

Servant leaders influence greatly because they have a strong sense of their identity in Christ. Paul lays the foundation for our identity in Ephesians 1:1-14 and provides several key factors that shape our identity. The principles he lists apply to all believers, but three have special significance for servant leaders.

Servant leaders are blessed. *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3). Paul makes it clear that we have already received “every spiritual blessing in Christ” and servant leaders accept this truth as a part of their identity. This provides a positive attitude towards life. Instead of complaining about what they don’t have, servant leaders set an example for others as they focus on the many ways God has blessed them. They recognize that their influence is a blessing from God and they treat it as a gift.

Servant leaders are chosen. *“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight”* (v. 4). Servant leaders accept the truth that God has chosen them as both a personal call to a relationship

with God and a sense of call to the place of influence in which God has placed them. This call is not based on their performance, but on the grace of God, and provides a sense of purpose and meaning for their leadership. Leaders who know they are called have nothing to prove to others. This confidence does not produce pride but instead allows the leader to call forth the best in others and to affirm the unique potential of all who follow them.

Servant leaders are forgiven. *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding”* (Ephesians 1:7-8). Forgiveness frees the servant leader from the burden of sin and allows them to extend the same grace to others. This does not mean overlooking poor performance or sin issues that need to be addressed but it means that they can lead others from a position of grace.

These three factors provide servant leaders with a deep sense of security that is reflected in the way they interact with other leaders as well as followers. Their identity is secure in Christ and they know they are blessed. They don't need to struggle to appear significant; they find their significance in the fact that Christ chose them as a special person. They do not lead with a sense of guilt and unworthiness; they have experienced the freedom of forgiveness. Their leadership reflects the fact that their identity is secure in Christ as they bless others, call forth the best in others, and extend forgiveness to those who need it. Servant leaders who know their identity in Christ are powerfully influential. Reflect on Paul's statements and settle any doubts about who you are in Christ.

In the next several chapters, we'll reflect on more leadership lessons from Ephesians.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Do I tend to focus on the negative or positive things in life?

What impact does this have on my leadership?

In what ways am I blessed as a leader?

2. In what way do I possess a sense of call to my place of influence?

Am I convinced that God has given me a gift of influence where I am?

3. How easily can I call others to live out their own potential?

4. Are there ways in the past week in which I have extended forgiveness to someone under my leadership?



24. LEADERSHIP NUGGETS FROM EPHESIANS: GRACE TO LEAD

Servant leaders have grace to lead. Paul's discourse on grace in Ephesians 2:1-10 provides great insight for the role of grace in servant leadership. Grace has been described as "unmerited favor," God's lavish goodness to each one of us. The grace Paul describes for all believers also has significant implications for servant leaders.

Grace provides perspective on our past. Paul paints a dismal picture of our past (v. 1-3). It included spiritual death, living under the dictatorship of the enemy and gratifying the desires of our flesh. He wants to ensure that every believer recognizes that without the grace of God, we would still be completely lost. Servant leaders acknowledge that they have come a long way from this dismal past. There is no difference between the leader who was privileged to grow up in a strong Christian environment and the one who spent years in open disobedience. Both acknowledge that apart from the grace of God, their sinful past would determine their future. They are forever grateful for the great change God has made in their life.

Grace perceives leadership as a gift. *"And this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that*

no one can boast” (v. 8-9). Paul makes it clear that the favor we have received from God is a gift, not the result of our effort. Servant leaders recognize that salvation and subsequent opportunities to serve in leadership are not based on their own goodness but on the grace of God. They humbly acknowledge that the influence they wield in their homes, businesses, churches, or working places is a precious gift from God.

Grace provides perspective on victories. Leaders love to see results and celebrate victories. These celebrations can easily become focused on the leader who made it happen and encourage boasting about the success. Paul makes it clear that grace means *“no one can boast.”* Servant leaders work hard, but they recognize that victory comes from God and is for His glory. They acknowledge that leadership is not about them; it is about God. Their leadership serves His purposes, not simply to build their own kingdom.

Grace promotes good leadership. As we recognize our past, see leadership as a gift, and refuse to boast, it might appear that we should lead with timidity or a sense of unworthiness. Instead Paul makes it clear that a proper understanding of grace leads to freedom to lead with confidence. We are *“...created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”* (v. 10). At home, in the corporate office, in the marketplace or church, servant leaders work hard to lead well. They learn and grow, recognizing that their leadership is one of the “good works” for which God has created them. They energetically cast vision, build teams, delegate tasks, and empower their followers for action. They recognize that their servant leadership has eternal consequences and are able to extend grace to others in the same way they have received it.

Take a moment to reflect on the role of God’s grace in your leadership using the following questions to guide your

24. Leadership Nuggets from Ephesians: Grace to Lead

thinking. Thank God for the grace to lead; then go forth and lead with grace!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. How has my past shaped who I am as a leader?

Have I tended to see my past as making me worthy or unworthy to lead?

How does grace change the focus from my past to what God has done to set me free?

2. Do I see my leadership as a sacred gift from God?

How will this be expressed in my leadership today?

3. In what ways am I tempted to take credit for my leadership victories?

What can I do to remind myself that my leadership is not about me, but about God's glory?

24. Leadership Nuggets from Ephesians: Grace to Lead

4. Have I been set free by grace to lead with confidence?

How does it change my perspective to realize that God prepared me to lead even before I knew I was a leader?



25. LEADERSHIP NUGGETS FROM EPHESIANS: GIFTED TO LEAD

Servant leaders are uniquely gifted to lead in ways that produce results. Paul recognizes the power of leaders who use their gifts for God's glory when he says, *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:11-13). In this passage, Paul lists several different leadership roles and provides insight into how God planned for servant leaders to function.

Servant leaders recognize the source of their gift. *"It was he who gave...."* While they take seriously the responsibility to develop their leadership abilities to their highest potential, servant leaders recognize that their gift of leadership is not from their own training or intelligence; it is a sacred gift from God to be used for Him and His purposes.

Servant leaders distinguish the gift of leadership and service. *"To prepare God's people for works of service..."*

Paul lists two very different roles, doing works of service and preparing, or equipping, the workers. Leadership is equipping the worker, not simply doing the work. Many servant leaders falter on this point. They are called to serve and have developed competence in serving skillfully. They have a servant's heart, and it is easier to keep doing the work than to make the effort to train others to do it well. Pride and insecurity make it even more difficult for some leaders to stop doing the work. But Paul understood that servant leaders are gifted to lead. They realize that the best way they can serve their organization is to equip everyone to do their part in the group. If leaders fail to equip, the workers will not do the acts of serving and God's vision will never be accomplished. Followers need servant leaders who understand their unique call to provide leadership.

Servant leaders use their gift to release growth. *"...so that the body of Christ may be built up..."* The combination of leaders who equip and followers who are busy serving brings growth to the church, school, business or any other organization. Paul asserts that it builds up the body, promotes unity, and defines maturity. The reverse is also true. When leaders fail to use their gift to equip others, organizational growth will be limited.

You are gifted by God to lead, don't neglect the opportunity to build and equip followers for service. Take some time today to equip one of your followers for a specific task!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Have I acknowledged God's gift in my life to lead others?

In what way does this recognition, or lack of it, affect my leadership?

2. What percentage of my time is spent equipping others to work?

What percentage am I actually doing the work?

What do I need to change in how I use my time?

3. Many leaders who are not followers of Jesus have learned to equip others and the results in their organizations are positive. What is the difference between their motivation and that of a servant leader?

4. How is equipping others an act of serving?

What does it say about the value of all persons?

5. How does my organizational culture reflect the value of equipping?

Are there ways that we can improve?



26. LEADERSHIP NUGGETS FROM EPHESIANS: INFLUENCE FROM THE BOTTOM

Servant leaders practice the art of influencing from the bottom rather than dictating from the top. It's an upside down approach to leadership that goes directly against the leader's flesh and against most of the models they have experienced. Influencing from the bottom is hard to practice in the marketplace or school. At home it is even harder to implement but Paul instructs all to do it in Ephesians 5:21-33.

Read the entire passage with special focus on the following verses: *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."* (v. 21-22, 25). In this passage Paul radically redefines leadership for both men and women and provides valuable insight into how we can influence from below.

Servant leaders influence through submission. *"Submit to one another."* Submit is not a popular word in leadership literature today and Paul obviously didn't

understand how to use politically correct language! However, submission is not a sign of weakness, inferiority, or stupidity. Instead, it is *a conscious choice to yield to another*. This kind of submission exerts a powerful influence on any relationship in the home or office. The person who yields, not out of weakness but from a quiet strength, gains the high ground of influence. Submission frees leaders from the tyranny of always needing to have things their way and can break the fighting spirit between two strong personalities. The act of yielding to another powerfully affirms the value of the other person because it indicates that he or she is important also. This is especially true when the submission comes from a person with positional authority.

Servant leaders influence through surrender. *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”* We don’t normally associate surrender with strong leadership, but Christ demonstrated servant leadership by giving Himself up for those who followed Him. This is demonstrated most clearly as He gave up His own life for the sake of those He came to lead. Servant leaders give up their own rights for the good of those they lead whether at home, in the marketplace or in the church. They ‘die’ to selfish desires and surrender their rights for the good of others. While it seems like this would not influence others, consider good advice given to King Rehoboam, *“If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants”* (1 Kings 12:7). Serving by laying down our rights and privileges exerts a powerful influence on those we lead.

Submission and surrender do not negate the need for decisive, action-oriented leadership. Neither do they imply that we can never press for the implementation of our ideas. Rather, they provide great opportunities for servant leaders to influence from the bottom just like Jesus Himself! Will

26. Leadership Nuggets from Ephesians: Influence from the Bottom

you take the risk today to learn a new way of leading as you seek to influence from the bottom?



For further reflection and discussion:

1. What keeps me from practicing submission and surrender in my leadership?

In what ways does my culture or environment encourage or discourage this form of leadership?

2. Is there a relationship I am in right now that has conflict?

What might happen if I consciously decide to yield to the other person?

3. Do I always need to have things my way?

When is the last time I have consciously yielded my desire to another?

What was the result in my own heart and how did it impact the relationship?

26. Leadership Nuggets from Ephesians: Influence from the Bottom

4. Are there times when yielding to another can be the wrong thing to do for a servant leader?

If so, what principles guide our decision for that situation?



27. LEADERSHIP NUGGETS FROM EPHESIANS: BATTLEFIELD LEADERSHIP

Fight. Conquer. Win. Now we're talking leadership! After emphasizing the importance of knowing our identity, the power of prayer, and leadership from the bottom, Paul closes his book with a call to engage in the cosmic battle that is raging around us. But his reflections on battlefield leadership take us in a very different direction than popular leadership strategy. What can servant leaders learn from Paul's instructions in Ephesians 6:10-18 about battlefield leadership?

Servant leaders recognize the enemy. *"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (v. 12). Leadership involves movement, which always produces friction. But servant leaders recognize that their battle is primarily spiritual. It's not about numbers of members or customers. Profit is not the bottom line. The battle is not against individuals or competitors. Every servant leader is engaged in a cosmic

battle against the forces of evil. Servant leaders in the business realm are called to defeat the enemies of greed, competition, and selfishness that drive our economies. Servant leaders in the educational sphere oppose godless ideologies. Servant leaders everywhere are called to set people free from the bondages of mistaken identities, poverty, broken relationships, and spiritual oppression. In our daily leadership it is easy to look at individuals or current challenges as our primary opponents, but Paul tells us that servant leaders keep their focus on the real enemy.

Servant leaders utilize their weapons. *“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand”* (v. 13). Since the battle is not against flesh and blood, Paul points servant leaders to the weapons that are available for the fight. Servant leaders are at the forefront of the battle and need the “full” armor to win. Servant leaders use all that is available to fight. Further, they recognize that they are fighting not for themselves, but for God’s Kingdom and for those they serve. They boldly express righteousness and truth in the church and marketplace to fight against corruption and deception. They use faith, instead of clever leadership strategies, to withstand attacks. They pray all the time, in every place, with all kinds of requests. They stand boldly on the truth of the Scripture and use it with authority in their offices, boardrooms, hallways, shops, and pulpits.

Servant leaders stand in victory. *“...when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand”* (v. 13). For a time you might see dictators, greedy CEO’s, and false religions ruling the world. But Paul commands four times to *“stand your ground.”* Servant leaders operate from a position of strength in Christ. They are not retreating; they are defending and fleshing out the victory that Christ already won. They stand as Christ’s servant warriors, bold

27. Leadership Nuggets from Ephesians: Battlefield Leadership

and confident of their ultimate victory and able to win the battle in the sphere of influence He has given them. They fight and they win, but do so as servant leaders following Paul's instructions for the battlefield.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. What am I tempted to see as the enemy in my leadership?
2. In what way does God want my leadership to wage war against the real enemy? (Be as practical as possible.)
3. Reflect on the specific weapons that Paul lists in Ephesians 6:13-18. How are these weapons used in the realm of my leadership?

How does my usage of these weapons make my leadership different than a leader who is not a servant?

4. Are there areas in which I have been tempted to give up leading and accept defeat?

What does it mean for me to rise up and “stand” in this situation?



28. LEADING ON THURSDAY MORNING

What do servant leaders do on Thursday morning? They work at their calling! A few open the church door and enter their office. But many report to an office, others show up at a bank, many of them step into a classroom full of students, others sign in for a factory shift while others make a busy hospital corridor their daily realm of influence.

Servant leaders are called to serve through their vocations. They understand Paul's instruction: *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving"* (Colossians 3:23-24). What characterizes their leadership in their vocation?

Servant leaders work as stewards. They recognize that God has given them gifts and abilities to do what they are doing. Paul made it clear that this calling includes all vocations when he said *"Whatever you do..."* We often allow ourselves to falsely assume that some professions are 'spiritual' while others are 'secular' but Scripture teaches that all work is a sacred trust given to us by God. Carpenters, plumbers, business owners, lawyers, pastors,

farmers, and teachers are all working on behalf of God. He has given you the level of influence and responsibility which you enjoy. He has given you people around you that He wants to touch through your work. *Do you see your work as a sacred trust from God?*

Servant leaders work hard. Paul calls you to work with “all your heart.” Servant leaders should be the best workers in any location because of the value God places on their work. They can put their hearts into their work because they see it as a calling from God. *Are you doing the very best that you can do in your work? In what way might God be calling you to improve?*

Servant leaders work for the Lord. Paul reminds us “*It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*” Servant leaders recognize that their work is not for another person or organization but for the Lord. This gives meaning to the most menial task or lowly job. Servant leaders who teach students recognize that they are sharing God’s knowledge with the next generation. Leaders who build homes understand that they are constructing places for God’s children to be safe and secure. This also reminds those who are at the ‘top’ levels of organizational leadership that they are still under the authority of the Lord and will answer to Him for how they use their influence. *Do you see what you are doing as furthering God’s plan on earth?*

Servant leaders work towards the future reward. Paul reminds us that “*you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.*” Servant leaders are not motivated only by current compensation levels or by the balance sheet at the end of the accounting period; they take the long range view and are able to patiently invest in God’s work even if they don’t see immediate results. *Is your focus on the immediate return, or the future?*

Whatever vocation God has called you to serve in, lead in that place with the heart of Jesus. Serve today where you are called!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. What evidence is there in my work that I see it as a calling from God?
2. If my work is full-time ‘church’ work; in what way do I recognize and affirm the gifts and calling of the rest of those I lead?

Am I avoiding the trap of seeing my work as more ‘spiritual’ than theirs?

3. Do you feel under-compensated for what you do?

What difference does this verse make in how you see your compensation level?



29. THE ART OF AVOIDING PEOPLE

Leaders pursue their goals with intensity and focus on their objectives. But effective leaders also know what to avoid. The Bible provides many instructions for servant leaders to ‘avoid,’ ‘run away from’ or ‘stay away!’ As I evaluated these instructions I found most of them centered around two categories: people and temptations. We’ll examine the art of avoiding temptations in our next chapters; for now let’s think about the art of avoiding people!

All leaders are in the people business and relationships are a key ingredient to success. At the same time, leaders recognize that the people with whom they associate can influence them either positively or negatively. Servant leaders take seriously the caution of Scripture about who to avoid.

Avoid people who talk too much. The writer of Proverbs says it very clearly, “*A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much*” (Proverbs 20:19), and, “*When words are many, sin is not absent*” (Proverbs 10:19a). Paul adds, “*Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more*

ungodly” (2 Timothy 2:16). Does this remind you of anyone you know?

Avoid people who argue. Paul warns Titus about people who take pleasure in arguments. *“But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless”* (Titus 3:9). Leaders are problem solvers and healthy debate is to be encouraged. But some persons are more interested in the debate than the solution. They are more focused on winning arguments than building the organization. Avoid them!

Avoid people who are divisive. So much of contemporary talk is divisive that we easily become used to it! Church leaders speak negatively about other denominations with different perspectives; staff in organizations can easily criticize the competition. Politicians sometimes deliberately stir up feelings of animosity between opposing groups of people hoping for personal benefit. This is not a new challenge for leaders. Years ago Paul cautioned, *“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people”* (Romans 16:17-18).

Avoid people who are hot-tempered! Those who are quick to become angry make dangerous friends. *“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared”* (Proverbs 22:24-25). Servant leaders practice self-control, a fruit of the Spirit, in their own lives and they avoid angry friends.

Servant leaders do not avoid these relationships out of hatred. But they acknowledge that when possible, their choice of relationships will impact their own ability to lead.

29. The Art of Avoiding People

They recognize that part of self-discipline is learning the art of avoiding those who will lead them in the wrong direction. They make every effort to be people who are the opposite: with controlled speech, avoiding useless debates, bringing people together instead of driving them apart and keeping their emotions under control. And whenever possible, they avoid those heading in the opposite direction!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Before looking at your friends, look at yourself!
Do you talk or argue too much, divide rather than unite, or quickly lose your temper?

If so, what does this indicate about your heart?

What steps can you take to allow God to begin to change you?

2. Reflect on your closest circle of friends, the ones you choose to be with when you have time. Are they friends who build you up or tear you down?

Are they helping you fulfill God's purposes for your life?

Are any changes needed?

3. Where you have relationships with negative persons that you cannot avoid, what steps can you take to guard yourself against negative influences?



30. THE ART OF AVOIDING TEMPTATION

Servant leaders know what to avoid! In the last chapter we looked at the kind of people that leaders avoid; in this chapter and the next we'll examine some common temptations servant leaders should avoid. Paul reminds all of us that the temptations we face are common and that there is a way out. *"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13). Servant leaders learn the art of avoiding temptation as they guard against three areas in which every leader will be tempted.

Avoid the temptation of idolatry. *"Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry"* (1 Corinthians 10:14). Idolatry seems like an old fashioned word which brings up images of bowing down before physical statues. Most leaders will not be tempted with this kind of idolatry. But at its heart idolatry is simply putting other things in place of God. Leaders are tempted to set their own goals and work towards them. They can become obsessed with plans to grow or produce a profit. These are good things but can

quickly capture the place in the heart of the leader that only God should fill. Servant leaders take time to nurture their own relationship with God and recognize the truth of Jesus' words, *"Apart from me, you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). They avoid any form of idolatry.

Avoid the temptation of individualism. Those who lead organizations, groups or businesses are very capable individuals and can easily think that they are able to lead alone. Servant leaders acknowledge that they need others to help them on their journey. *"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Servant leaders avoid the temptation to lead alone. They find mentors who speak wisdom into their lives. They find persons to whom they can confess their sins in obedience to James 5:16. They cry out to God for deliverance from the tyranny of self-sufficiency. They humbly recognize that asking for help is not a sign of weakness but strength.

Avoid the temptation of loving money. Paul admonished Timothy to flee from the love of money. He warned, *"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs"* (1 Timothy 6:9-10). All leaders need money and most visions require money. Paul does not say money is the temptation, but "the love of money" is what draws many away from God. Many leaders fall into the temptation of making money the focus of their leadership. Decisions are made, not on the basis of God's direction or what is right, but on what will result in more financial capacity. Servant leaders ask God to guard their hearts against the love of money. They ask God to provide what is needed to carry out the vision and trust Him for provision.

30. The Art of Avoiding Temptation

Servant leaders consciously create boundaries in their lives to avoid these temptations. Take a moment to reflect on how you are doing as a leader in avoiding these three areas. Use the following questions as a starting point. If you find areas in which you have not successfully avoided, quickly run to our God of Grace who is eager to work in your life and mine to make us more and more like Jesus!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. What things in my own leadership am I tempted to put before God? (Reflect prayerfully on each of the following: Money/profit, success, popularity, comfort, self-effort, my own strategy, my own giftedness/ability, family, my own resources, etc.)
2. Have I ever recognized my own tendency towards individualism?

In what way is this reflected in my leadership?

What is the root cause of the individualism in my heart?

Have I deliberately asked others to mentor me, hold me accountable, and walk with me?

3. In what ways am I most tempted to love money?

What steps should I take to guard my heart and life against this?



31. THE ART OF AVOIDING IMMORALITY

Far too many Christian leaders have lost their ability to influence because of sexual immorality. I am certain that each reader of this chapter can give a personal story of this sad situation. My intent is not to condemn those who have fallen, but to help each of us deal with this sober reality in our own leadership. Paul gives all leaders clear instruction: “*Flee from sexual immorality*” (1 Corinthians 6:18). Each of us as servant leaders can take several steps to avoid this temptation.

Avoid immorality by acknowledging the heart of the matter. We don’t like to admit it, but Jesus makes it very clear that immorality comes from our hearts (Matthew 15:19). James reminds us that the first stage of temptation is our own desires (James 1:14). Our hearts and thoughts desire what is forbidden and the enemy of our souls tries hard to convince us that “*stolen water is sweet*” (Proverbs 9:17). Our culture bombards us with advertisements and examples which feed these desires and encourage us to focus our thoughts on sensuality. We all need to cry out for God to transform our hearts and give us hearts like His, hearts of genuine love for others and deep respect for each

individual as a unique creation of God. Then we can experience the goodness and beauty of our sexuality as God intended it to be. Servant leaders acknowledge daily that their hearts and minds need God's transformative power.

Avoid immorality by setting boundaries. Servant leaders realize that especially in this area that has caused so many to fall, wisdom demands that they exercise extreme caution and carefully set boundaries. All of us are faced with daily temptations in this area. The internet has made pornography easily and privately available to all. We often work in close relationships with persons of the opposite sex. Business lunches or counseling sessions can quickly create emotional attachments. Servant leaders recognize these dangers and set personal boundaries to guard themselves. They recognize their own vulnerabilities and the locations or times in which they are most likely to fall. The writer of Proverbs warns, *"Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house"* (Proverbs 5:8). Higher positions of leadership often provide a place from which leaders feel like they are entitled to indulge in some form of pleasure as a reward for their hard work.

While some leaders use their position as a place to indulge their own appetites, servant leaders recognize a higher calling to serve God through their position and deliberately set boundaries to protect themselves. They avoid **places** of temptation such as social events, the internet, the magazine rack or other places in which they face strong temptation. They identify **times** of temptation such as when traveling alone or times after a season of heavy responsibility and take steps to be especially cautious at these times. They identify **emotional** temptations where their hearts are easily drawn into inappropriate closeness such as lunch meetings or counseling sessions with members of the opposite sex. When they identify these areas, servant leaders set boundaries that enable them to avoid even the appearance of evil.

31. The Art of Avoiding Immorality

Avoid immorality by fleeing. Paul's language is strong, "*Flee from sexual immorality.*" In some areas of our leadership we are commanded to stand and fight, but Paul tells us that when it comes to sexual temptations we should run! Joseph, when faced with extreme temptation, left his coat and ran. Running away is typically seen as a sign of cowardice, but with sexual temptation, fleeing is the mark of a wise leader! Servant leaders recognize that fleeing temptation is a sign of wisdom, not cowardice.

Avoid immorality by establishing accountability. Leaders, especially men, need accountability in this area to make it to the finish line. Sharing the struggle with someone else brings this into the light where God can bring freedom. I have been greatly helped by mentors in my life who can ask me tough questions and with whom I can share failures or times of weakness. Servant leaders recognize that God has not called us to lead alone and they are humble enough to ask for help!

Take a moment and ask how well you are doing in avoiding immorality. Use the following questions to guide your thoughts.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. In what *times* am I most tempted towards immorality?

Are there *places* that trigger this temptation?

Are there *things* that I choose to see which lead me into temptation?

Am I faithful in the way I use the internet?

2. What boundaries have I put in place in my own life to guard against these temptations?

Specifically, are there places I refuse to go?

Movies/magazines I refuse to look at?

Ways of relating to the opposite sex which I refuse to do?

31. The Art of Avoiding Immorality

3. Are there relationships in which I am currently involved that are leading towards emotional engagement?

What do I need to do in order to change direction?

4. Who can I ask to hold me accountable in the area of sexual purity?

When will I initiate this relationship?

5. Take a moment to pray for leaders you know. Ask God to keep them strong against the temptation of immorality.

Additional scriptures for reflection and study:

2 Timothy 2:22

1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 6:18; 10:12-13

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

Proverbs 5:1-23

James 1:12-15



32. “NO” POWER

Great servant leaders learn the power of saying “no.” They recognize that serving others does not always mean accepting every invitation or request for service. While they have a passion to do more for God, they recognize their own limitations and determine to focus on obedience to God’s will instead of the demands of others. They understand that serving others does not mean agreement with all of their requests. They follow the example of Jesus, Paul and other biblical leaders who had the strength to refuse many of the demands on their time and energy. Over 150 times in Scripture the phrase “I will not” is used. Servant leaders learn when to say “no.”

Say “no” when the time is not right. Sometimes the request is valid and the reasons are compelling, but the timing is not right. Jesus’ own brothers came to Him with an opportunity that seemed perfect to advance His career. But Jesus responded, “*The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right*” (John 7:6). Sometimes the best response from a servant leader is “I cannot do it now.”

Say “no” when the priority is not right. Many opportunities faced by servant leaders are not bad things. They are good things but not always the best. Choosing the

best over the good requires saying “no” to something. Jesus told Martha, “*Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her*” (Luke 10:42). Servant leaders recognize that saying “yes” to a business or ministry opportunity also means that something else will not get done. The chance to make more money or preach one more message might mean that our families or another priority is neglected. We need a “not to do” list alongside our “to do” list in order to keep our priorities straight.

Say “no” when the motive is not right. Leaders love to say “yes.” It’s a natural part of leadership! We want to accomplish our goals and achieve more. But often the desire to say “yes” comes from wrong motives. It may be a desire to please other people and valuing their approval above God’s approval. To truly serve others we must be set free from the desire to please others. When the option we are considering is more prestigious, will further our career, or bring more financial gain, our motive to say “yes” may be selfish. James teaches us that there are times that our prayers are not answered because we ask with selfish motives (James 4:3). Check your motive for saying “yes.” Is it because God is calling you to do that act, or is it a desire to please others or pursue selfish ends?

Say “no” when the direction is not right. Servant leaders recognize that every choice has consequences that will lead us in a certain direction. Paul was headed for Jerusalem when the Ephesian elders wanted more time with him. He recognized that saying “yes” would not allow him to move in God’s direction for him. So he said “no” (Acts 18:20)! Sometimes God clearly directs a leader to move in another direction, perhaps even contrary to what seems like common sense. In Acts 8, Philip left a great revival to obey God’s direction to meet the needs of the Ethiopian eunuch. Servant leaders seek to always move in the direction to which God is leading them.

How can we learn to say “no” at the right times? Paul

32. “No” Power

shared the key with Titus, an emerging servant leader, *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...”* (Titus 2:11-12). May that grace of God be yours and mine and teach us to say “no!”



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Am I able to say “no” at the right times?

When have I said “no” recently?

2. Do I have a *need* to please others?

How can I be set free from this need?

3. Does saying “no” conflict with serving others?

Why or why not?

4. When I should say “no” how can I communicate this to others in a way that honors our relationship?

32. "No" Power

5. Of the things that I am currently doing, are there some to which I should say "no?"

6. Of the opportunities that are in front of me, to which ones should I say "no?"



33. SPEAKING TRUTH IN LOVE

Leaders use their tongue with great impact. Servant leaders recognize the power of their tongue to bring life or death to those who listen. Paul identified one challenge facing all leaders, “*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ*” (Ephesians 4:15). He recognizes the struggle between speaking what is **true** but saying it in **love**. What is required for a servant leader to speak the truth in love?

Speaking truth in love requires balance. Paul’s instruction implies that as we speak, both truth and love are present in a balanced manner. Leaders often take one of two extremes. They might say, “I’m going to tell the truth no matter what you feel. Your performance was unacceptable!” They value truth over relationships. Or, they might go to the other extreme and withhold truth because it would be too painful for the relationship. “I can’t say what I really think because she will be hurt!” They value love over truth. Culture influences the direction leaders go on this. Some cultures typically prize truth over relationships while others go to such great lengths to honor relationships that speaking truth is compromised. Where truth is neglected, *results* suffer. Change and correction will

not happen. On the other hand, when love is neglected *relationships* suffer. In the same way, personalities can also influence our natural tendency toward one or the other. But servant leaders find a balance. They love others and recall that the second greatest commandment is to “*love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:39). At the same time they recognize that Jesus not only spoke truth, He *was truth* (John 14:6). They recognize that this is not an either/or situation where one must prevail, but a both/and situation where the beauty of truth and love are blended together.

Speaking truth in love requires wisdom. The aim of the servant leader is not simply to make a statement of truth, nor to keep a friend. Rather, the goal is to speak “*according to their needs*” (Ephesians 4:29). If they need truth, speak it clearly! If the need is for love, offer it generously. When both are needed at the same time, offer a balance. The writer of Proverbs notes, “*How good is a timely word*” (Proverbs 15:23). Wisdom in speech is knowing *what* to say, *when* to say it and *how* to say it.

Speaking truth in love requires maturity. Paul notes that when we learn to speak the truth in love we will “grow up.” Mature leadership is characterized by balanced speech that meets the need both for truth and love. Servant leaders demonstrate maturity when they choose their words carefully based not only on their own needs, but on the needs of the listener. They show maturity by humbly mixing truth and love. They demonstrate maturity by rising above their own personality or cultural preferences to deliberately speak like Jesus. Maturity in speech comes with time and continual practice of balancing truth and love.

We have all experienced the pain of seeing the negative impact of words not carefully chosen. May we also experience today the joy of knowing that we have spoken truth in love!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Does my cultural context value truth or love more highly?

What is the result?

In what ways has my leadership reflected this reality?

2. Some personalities tend more towards pleasing people while others place a high value on truth. In what way does my personality influence my natural tendency to speak either truth or love?

3. Reflect on a recent communication with a follower. Was it balanced?

Was it wise?

Did it show maturity?

Are there things you would change?

Is it still possible to correct what happened?



34. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: GAINING PERSPECTIVE

Great servant leaders not only manage their time well, they have a keen sense of timing. They have a sense of “when” it is the right time to do something. Time management helps leaders make effective use of the time available, essentially doing the right things. But leaders also need to have a sense of timing, doing what needs to be done at the right time. Some leaders may have an intuitive sense of timing; they just “know” when the time is right to act or to speak. But all leaders can develop a stronger sense of timing if they are willing to learn. In this series we will focus on becoming leaders who understand timing and learn to do things at the right time.

We gain perspective on this from Solomon’s reflections in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11, *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give*

up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. He has made everything beautiful in its time."

What do these verses teach us about timing?

Timing involves everything. Solomon observes that there is "*a time for everything.*" There is nothing "*under heaven*" that is not affected by timing. In every area of our lives, including our leadership, timing is critical. Notice that Solomon does not say there is time to do everything. Not everything can be done, but everything that needs to be done can be done at the right time. It's all a matter of timing. Servant leaders recognize that there is a time for work and a time to relax; a time for family and for ministry; time for movement and a time for waiting. They accept the reality that there is not time for everything but there is a timing for all things.

Timing implies exclusivity. Solomon tells us that there is, "*A season for every activity.*" Seasons change with time. It seems obvious that there is a time to plant and a time to reap. But this also implies that there is a season in which it is wrong to plant! If there is a right time, there is also a wrong time. A great joke told at the wrong time is a disaster. A needed change introduced at the wrong time will not bring the desired results. It's a matter of timing. Servant leaders look for the right seasons. They know that seasons for leaders are not always as obvious as the seasons for planting. So they ask God to help them develop the ability to discern correct timing.

Timing influences beauty. "*He has made everything beautiful in its time.*" The right timing brings beauty. Wrong timing yields ugliness! In leadership, proper timing yields beautiful results while poor timing makes a mess. Servant leaders desire to honor God by showing His beauty in all they do.

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Servant leaders desire to do things at the right time. They seek not only to do the right things, but to do them at the best time. They are willing to wait or say “no” when the timing is not right. With time, they gain God’s perspective on timing.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Reflect. How effectively have I been at choosing the correct timing:

In my speaking?

In my family?

In my work?

In my leadership?

What can I learn from my reflections?

2. Think about an experience you had in which you did the right thing at the right time. What was the result?

How did I know the time was right?

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3. Think about an experience in which your timing was wrong. What was the result?

What caused me to miss the right time?

4. What “season” am I in right now in my life?

In my leadership?

For what activity or direction is this the right time?



35. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: GETTING PERSONAL

Jesus had an amazing sense of personal timing. *“Therefore Jesus told them, ‘The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come.’ Having said this, he stayed in Galilee. However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.... At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come”* (John 7:6, 8-10, 30).

This account helps us understand that for each person timing may be different. Jesus did not condemn the disciples for their desire to go to Jerusalem; He simply told them that the time was not right for Him. He had a personal sense of timing. We can learn universal principles about timing but every servant leader must also learn from Jesus’ example that timing is personal. His example teaches servant leaders several principles.

Personal timing requires clarity. *“The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right.”* Jesus was clear that He operated on His own sense of timing. He was not condemning His disciples or expecting them to operate

on the same sense of timing. He knew clearly what His Father wanted Him to do and knew that it was not His time to travel. Servant leaders learn that following God's plan for them will sometimes mean they have a different sense of timing than another leader. Some leaders see other groups moving forward and assume that they should do the same. The other leader may be constructing a building or using a new model for growth or training. It is easy to assume that if it works for that leader, it should be good for another. But servant leaders learn that just because someone else is doing it does not mean that it's time for them. This clarity requires a secure leader who knows who they are and have clarity about God's call on their life. This will set them free from the need to be like everyone else, or operate on the timing of another.

Personal timing determines priorities. *“Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.”* The disciples went on ahead but Jesus remained where He was, choosing to do other things at this time. He later went to Jerusalem, so this was not an issue of whether or not the trip was right or wrong. Instead it was a question of what was most important at that time. Jesus' sense of timing changed His priorities. When He did travel to Jerusalem, He went secretly rather than publically, apparently because He did not want to draw attention to His presence. For the disciples this was not a problem. Servant leaders learn to live by priorities and learn to set their schedule to do the right things at the right time. But they recognize that their priorities may not be the same as other leaders; they are personal.

Personal timing prevents disaster. *“No one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.”* John wants us to understand that Jesus avoided disaster because He was operating in God's timing for His life. Rather than determining timing by the presence of danger; He avoided danger by focusing on timing. Some leaders assume that if there is high risk ahead they should not move. But Jesus

35. It's About Timing: Getting Personal

assumed He was safe if He moved at the right time. For Jesus the disaster avoided was personal harm. In our leadership, wrong timing may bring very different disasters such as broken relationships, financial challenges, wasted time or lost opportunities. Servant leaders avoid disaster as they learn to follow God's personal timing for their lives.

Learn from Jesus that all leaders need a personal sense of timing. You are not called to follow the timing of others, but like Jesus, to know God's timing for your own life and to follow that with confidence.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Do I have a clear sense of personal timing for my life or do I look at others and follow their timing?

How can my sense of timing be developed?
(Reflect on how Jesus knew the will of His Father.)

2. Has there been a time when I assumed that because someone else was doing something that it was time for me to do the same?

If so, what was the result and what can I learn from that experience?

3. Is there a current area of risk that I am considering?

How should timing influence this decision?



36. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: TIME TO GROW

It's always time to grow! Your personal growth has a major impact on your leadership. The writer of Hebrews shares a strong warning about the issue of timing and growth.

"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:11-14).

While this passage has implications for all believers, the stakes are even higher for leaders since their own growth determines the growth of those under them. Servant leaders see and accept God's plan for their personal growth in these verses.

Grow early. *"By this time you ought to be teachers."* Not everyone will have the gift of teaching, but God's plan for every believer is for them to grow personally and then

pass on to others what they have learned. Those who do this kind of “teaching” are influencers of others. This makes them leaders whether or not they have a position or title. The leadership vacuum we experience is not a lack of gifting but a direct result of little growth. So, the timing for growth is as early as possible. If you are just beginning your leadership journey, do all you can to grow. Invest early in your growth; it will pay rich dividends later. If you have been a leader for a long time, look at areas you still need to grow. Just because you have been a leader for years does not mean your leadership is growing! Are you increasing your impact over time? How would the sentence end if God were saying these words to you, “By this time you ought to be....”? Servant leaders recognize that the only way to grow early is to grow now.

Grow quickly. *“You are slow to learn.”* The writer is alarmed about the speed of their growth. The difference in the speed of growth is a personal choice. This is not to say that growth is a quick process; it takes time. But, servant leaders desire to grow as quickly as possible to maximize their impact. They recognize that the only way to grow quickly is to schedule time for their own growth. They are determined not to allow their busy schedules to crowd out time for their personal growth. They look for books, seminars, coaches and other resources which can speed their growth. They seek to learn as quickly as possible from their own mistakes. They are passionate about growing as quickly as possible.

Grow continually. *“Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves...”* Over time personal growth leads to maturity and the ability to handle “solid food.” Maturity is the outcome of continued growth. Servant leaders recognize the compounding growth that comes as they continue to grow. They value the growth that has already happened but refuse to become satisfied with where they are at. They resolve never to stop growing.

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They want continuous growth, realizing that as they grow, they can more deeply impact others for the sake of God's Kingdom. Servant leaders realize that their growth is their own responsibility; they have "trained themselves." They don't wait for others to challenge them to grow, they see it as one of their primary leadership responsibilities.

It is always time to grow. It takes time to grow. Grow early, grow quickly, and grow continually to be the leader God has called you to be! I'm growing with you!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. How would the sentence end if God were speaking these words to you, “By this time you ought to be....”?

What needs to change for me to move in this direction?

2. Is my growth slow, medium, or fast?

How has this impacted my leadership?

What, if anything, do I need to change?

3. How much of my current schedule is devoted to personal growth?

What are the obstacles to growing and what do I need to do to change?

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4. What are the current areas of growth in my leadership?

What steps could I take to speed up this growth?

What will be the impact as I continue to grow in these areas?

5. Are there persons to whom I should be accountable to grow or who can help me grow?

Who are they and when will I talk to them about my growth?



37. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: TIME TO PLAN

Leaders are people of action and movement. But wise leaders recognize that there is also a time to plan. Jesus taught the importance of taking time to plan. *“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish’”* (Luke 14:28-30). The story of this builder holds several important lessons for servant leaders about planning.

Planning comes before action. Jesus taught that a wise person plans first and then acts. *“Will he not first sit down....?”* The time to plan comes before the action. Leaders who act before planning often encounter unexpected difficulties and fail to accomplish the vision. In Jesus’ example, lack of planning would result in a half finished building and public ridicule. When plans are made before actions are taken, the chances of success increase dramatically. Wise business leaders plan before they launch a new product. Church leaders learn to plan before they plant a new church or start a new program. Servant leaders

recognize that the time to plan is *before* they act.

Planning confirms direction. Jesus said the builder should “*estimate the cost.*” The builder needed to calculate what the cost would be for his tower. If he had enough resources he could continue with the building. Planning helps a leader know what the vision will actually cost. Wise leaders recognize that if the plans don’t work on paper they are not likely to work in the real world! The cost of the vision may not always be financial. It may cost time to fulfill the vision. The cost may be that the leader must stop doing things he/she enjoys in order to do other things. The cost may be risking what is known for the unknown. Plans clarify the cost and confirm direction. Sometimes planning results in a change in the direction or timing of the vision. Servant leaders confirm direction as they take time to plan.

Planning takes time. The builder needed to “sit down.” It takes time to sit down and plan. The larger the project, the more time needed for planning. Some leaders don’t want to take the time to sit down and plan. It seems to delay their action and they would rather move forward quickly. But Jesus teaches that time for planning is not wasted since it actually helps to accomplish the vision. Servant leaders are willing to take time to sit down and plan. They take time at the beginning of every day to think about their plan for the day. They plan at the beginning of their year. They take time to plan when seasons change in their life or work. Servant leaders recognize the need to sit now to plan so they can run later!

Planning saves time. In Jesus’ example the builder who didn’t plan ended up with a building that was not completed. At the beginning, this builder appeared to make quick progress by not planning. But in the end he wasted time and resources. Effective leaders realize that time spent in planning actually saves time in acting. A few minutes of planning at the beginning of a day helps establish clear priorities and saves time during the day. The same is true

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for other planning. Servant leaders recognize that planning is not a waste of time but a way to save time.

Servant leaders recognize that there is a time to act and a time to plan. They have a sense of timing and know when it is time to plan and when it is time to act. Which time is it for you?



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Do I spend enough time in planning?

What is the result in my leadership?

2. What is the “tower” I want to build?

What will be the cost of accomplishing this vision?

Have I taken adequate time to plan for it?

Why or why not?

3. What project, new initiative, or direction in my leadership needs time to plan?

When will I take the time to plan?

What will keep me from adequate planning?

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4. Do I spend time daily to plan? Weekly? Monthly? Yearly?

What needs to change in my schedule to take time to plan?

5. What meeting do I have scheduled soon?

What do I need to plan before that meeting and when will I do it?



38. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO MOVE

There's a time to sit down and make a plan, but then there's a time to move into action! We examined planning in our last issue; now we will look at when it's time to move. Consider this account from the prophet Haggai. *"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.'" Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD"* (Haggai 1:2-8).

The plans for the temple were available but the people said that it wasn't yet time to act. God's response, through

the prophet, was that it was time to move! God's rebuke provides principles that help servant leaders know when it's time to move into action.

It's time to move when current priorities are wrong.

"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" The prophet rebuked the people for building their own homes when God's house was in disrepair. God reminded them that it was not right for them to have well-built homes while the temple was in disrepair. It was time for them to move on to the building of the temple. This was an issue of priorities. They were busy with activities that were less important and this kept them from moving on to better things. It is easy to stay busy with things that seem important; it is more difficult to know when it's time to change our focus. Servant leaders ask if the activity they are doing is actually God's priority for their lives. If not, they move to the one that is.

It's time to move when the current approach is not working. God reminds the people that they were in trouble. *"Give careful thought to your ways."* They had serious problems but they failed to see the relationship between their misplaced priorities and the unpleasant circumstances they were in. It was time to move and make a change! Servant leaders can persevere when that is the need. But they also are willing to look around and acknowledge that their current actions are not moving them in the right direction. They do not accept the current situation as the ideal. They see that it is time to change!

It's time to move when God's direction is clear. God made His direction very clear to the people. *"Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house..."* He called the people to action, not thinking or planning. God's direction is not always logical or in line with our reasoning. His direction may not always match the plans we have made. But when His direction is clear, it's

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time to move! Servant leaders look for God's direction and when it is clear they refuse to allow other priorities, lack of resources, or a busy schedule to keep them from following in obedience.

Plan well and then move into action. Unless it is clear that it is time to wait, it's time to move!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Is my natural tendency to plan or to act?

How does that impact my leadership and what can I do to balance the two?

2. Is there a project or task I am doing now that keeps me from doing a more important activity?

If it is time for a change, what needs to happen?

3. In what ways is my current leadership approach working well?

In what ways is it not working well?

Are the challenges I am facing a call to persevere or a call to change directions?

38. It's About Timing: A Time to Move

4. Are there any areas in which God has clearly indicated His direction to me and I have not yet moved into action?

If yes, what has kept me from moving and what will I change to walk in obedience?

If God has not clearly indicated direction, have I taken the time to listen?

When will I take the time?



39. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO MOVE ON

Leaders are people of action, and are usually on the move. But great leaders also know when it's time to move on! Paul visited believers in the city of Tyre on his way to Jerusalem and knew when it was time to move on. *"After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray. After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home"* (Acts 21:3-6). Paul enjoyed the week with the disciples, *"But when our time was up, we left..."* In this short phrase Paul helps all servant leaders realize that they need to know when it is time to move on.

It's time to move on when staying keeps us from better things. Paul was certainly doing good things with the disciples. He taught, encouraged, and strengthened them. But he also realized that if he stayed he would never

make it to Jerusalem and that was his mission. It is easy to be content doing good and miss the best. Servant leaders acknowledge that when the good keeps them from the best, it's time to move on.

It's time to move on when results decline. During his stay Paul heard the voices that urged him not to go to Jerusalem. We don't know if Paul was beginning to waver in his resolve to go to Jerusalem. But he seemed to know that staying would not bring the results he hoped for and it was time to move on. Leaders focus on results and often begin programs, products, committees, or procedures that at first produce good results. But with time the results may decline and the intended purpose is no longer met. Servant leaders recognize that when results no longer justify the activity, they must move on to other things. The committee or product may need to be stopped. This doesn't imply that we should easily give up when results are not what we expected. God may ask us to plant seeds that take years to bear fruit. If this is your situation, keep working in obedience and persevere. But if we are simply doing things because we did them in the past, it's time to reevaluate. Servant leaders are willing to take a hard look at results to see if it is time to move on.

It's time to move on when staying hinders the growth of others. Paul's visit was to encourage and build up the leaders in Tyre. This is one of the most significant tasks of all servant leaders. But as these leaders grow and develop there will come a time that the best thing we can do for them is to move on. Servant leaders are willing to get out of the way and let the emerging leaders run with the vision! For some leaders this may produce fear or anxiety and certainly there is high risk involved. But it is better to sense the right time to move on than it is to wait for our death to move us on! This does not mean that all our goals are met or there is nothing more to do, but it means that it is time to hand over to others and move on. Paul wisely knew

that his time was up and he moved on, trusting that the work of God would continue in the lives of those he left in Tyre.

Moving on is not always easy. It often means leaving the security of what we know or a place of comfort. There is risk involved when we move on from what is known to that which is unknown. But servant leaders say with Paul, *"When our time was up, we left."* They focus on priorities, evaluate results, and release power to others. They risk moving on for the sake of the Kingdom.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Are there things that I am doing which are good, but which keep me from doing better things?

What needs to change for me to move on?

2. What results are most critical for me as a leader?

Am I getting the results I expect from the programs, products, and activities in which I am engaged?

Are there activities that have stopped producing results which I need to stop?

What keeps me from moving on?

3. Are there people under my leadership that would grow more quickly if I would move on?

What in my heart keeps me from moving on?

Am I actively equipping others to carry on after I move on?

How can I be more strategic in this activity?

4. Are there compelling reasons for me to stay where I am right now in my life and leadership?

If so, what signs would indicate that it is time for me to leave?

If not, what keeps me from moving on?



40. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO STAY

Paul left when his time was up after a short visit in Tyre, but in Ephesus he stayed for two years! *“Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul”* (Acts 19:8-11). Paul was a man on the move and his unique calling to plant churches in new areas kept him mobile. For him to stay two years in one location was unprecedented. His time in Ephesus provides guidance for all servant leaders about when it is time to stay where we are.

It's time to stay when the vision is clear. Paul's focus was clearly on preaching about the *“kingdom of God.”* His vision was to see a church established in this new location. His vision was not only to establish the church but to see it develop as a strong group of disciples. In some places Paul

was chased away before he stayed long, but here he was able to continue his work. So, he stayed and taught ‘daily’ for two years. When a leader is not clearly focused on a vision it is easy to be distracted and move on to something else. Servant leaders focus on the vision and recognize that great work will not be completed quickly. They stay until the vision is accomplished.

It’s time to stay when the opposition is strong. There was immediate opposition to Paul’s message when “*some of them became obstinate.*” Paul does not allow the opposition to change his vision; instead he changes his approach and moves his teaching to another location in the city. In this place he continued his work. Many leaders interpret opposition as an indication that it is time to move on, but Paul helps us recognize that opposition may in fact be a call to press on! Leaders expect opposition and do not allow opposition to determine their direction. Servant leaders don’t stay because there is no opposition; they stay in spite of it.

It’s time to stay when results are maximized. Notice the results of Paul’s two years of work in the city, “*All the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.*” His message was heard by everyone! This impact is not something that happens quickly; it takes time. Paul realized that staying maximizes results. Paul’s legacy in the Ephesian church was strong. By staying in one place for two years, Paul helped the church in Ephesus to become one of the strongest of its time. His letter to this church, Ephesians, is one of few that does not need to address serious problems in the church! Generally, the leadership impact of a long-term stay is greater than the short term. Leaders who quickly move on to ‘better’ locations often lose long-term impact. Servant leaders understand that maximum results come when they stay.

Servant leaders are not interested in quick, easy results. They are willing to stay in one place and continue investing until they observe the fruit of their leadership. They overcome opposition and obstacles and refuse to give up. This may take two years like Paul, or it may take many more. But in the end they see great results because they know when it is time to stay.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. How well does my vision keep me focused on the task at hand?

In what ways might I be tempted to move on to other things?

2. How do I see opposition- as an opportunity to persevere or a call to move on?

What can I learn from Paul's example in Ephesus?

3. Have I ever moved on so quickly that I haven't seen maximum results?

What can I do to prevent this from happening again?

4. If I stay where I am, stay focused on the vision, and don't allow opposition to stop me, what results might I see in 2 more years? 5 years? 10?



41. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO CHANGE DIRECTION

Paul was a leader who knew when it was time to stay and when it was time to move on. But he also knew when it was time to change direction. We'll examine how he adjusted his course in this account from his second missionary journey:

"Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis" (Acts 16:6-11). Paul was eager to preach in new regions and had a plan of where he wanted to go after visiting the churches he planted on his first journey. But his plan was not the right direction and he

needed to change. His story helps all servant leaders know when it's time to continue moving but to change direction.

It's time to change direction when doors are closed.

Twice in this account Paul encountered closed doors. First, the Spirit kept him from preaching in Asia so he turned northward and kept moving. He moved toward another province and again, the Spirit would not allow them to enter. It must have been frustrating for this visionary leader to move and then not be able to continue. We don't know how Paul heard God's direction but it was clear that he was moving in the wrong direction. The door was closed. This was not opposition to the message as he experienced in many places; it was clearly a closed door.

It is ironic that the Holy Spirit stopped them from preaching! Servant leaders learn that sometimes God stops them from doing something good because He has something better.

Notice Paul's response. He did not try to force the door to open. Neither did he stop and wait for clarity. He just turned and moved in another direction. Although Paul lived before vehicles existed, he understood the principle that it is easier to steer a moving car than a parked one. Servant leaders do not sit and wait for instructions; they move in the direction which seems right and allow God to change the direction as needed. They recognize that closed doors sometimes mean new opportunities. Unless God says "wait," keep moving and allow Him to change the course as needed.

It's time to change direction when God reveals another direction. Paul finally reached Troas, a coastal city far from his original plan. There he had a vision at night that revealed to him the direction God wanted him to take. We cannot know why God waited to give this call until Paul had walked many miles and spent days on the road moving in other directions. But now the direction is clear to Paul and it is obviously time to go to Macedonia.

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His response was simple obedience.

We can easily miss the significance of this change. Paul's vision was to continue preaching in the region of current day Turkey. Instead, God sent him to Europe! The history of the Church was changed because Paul was a leader who understood when it was time to change direction. Most of us can likely trace our faith journey to the impact of the Gospel coming to Europe. Servant leaders quickly change direction when God reveals the way forward.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. How have I responded in the past to closed doors? (Trying to get them to open, giving up, waiting, etc.)

What can I learn from Paul's life?

2. Has God closed some doors in my life to redirect my plans?

What can I learn from that?

3. Are there current areas of my leadership that are closed doors?

What may God be saying to me about these areas?

4. When God reveals a new direction, am I willing to quickly obey even when it comes at great cost, as it did for Paul?



42. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO WAIT

Most leaders prefer action and hate times of waiting. Yet there are times for each of us when waiting is the only option. We may not have a clear sense of direction to move forward or other circumstances compel us to stay where we are for a season. A friend of mine compared these experiences to time we spend in the waiting room for the doctor to see us. We can grow impatient and frustrated or learn to use that time well. Paul experienced “God’s waiting room” as he waited two years for his trial in Rome. *“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Acts 28:30-31).

It was not Paul’s choice to wait but he was a prisoner facing trial. This was not his first time to wait; he had already spent two years in prison before he was transferred to Rome where this account takes place. Paul didn’t choose to wait, but he chose what he would do as he waited. His time in “God’s waiting room” can teach all servant leaders what to do when we are in a season of waiting. We can choose to do as Paul did in prison.

While waiting, build relationships. Paul “*welcomed all who came to see him.*” He could not go and visit others but he could welcome those who came to see him. He developed relationships with new people in Rome during this time of waiting. It would be easy to justify not developing relationships in a place where he was not certain he would be for long. But Paul still had the heart of a servant leader. He was not focused on his own waiting; instead, he welcomed others into his house. He recognized that in times of waiting he would meet people that he would not otherwise meet. Servant leaders don’t stop building relationships while waiting. Instead, they use their ‘waiting room’ to build new relationships and strengthen old ones.

While waiting, use your gifts. Paul, “*preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Preaching and teaching are what Paul was called and gifted to do. He no longer taught in the public arena or in front of huge crowds. He could have easily said that his gifts were no longer useful. But he continued using his gifts with the two or three people at a time that came to see him. Any time we use our gifts we grow and develop. Paul learned how to better communicate the gospel. Servant leaders don’t stop using their gifts when they are in the waiting room, they seize the opportunity to sharpen them.

While waiting, redeem the time. Paul did not turn his face towards the wall and wait for freedom. Rather he redeemed the time. History tells us that Paul used these two years in prison to write at least four New Testament books: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. He could not accomplish his dream of planting churches, but he could write to those he had already planted! I expect that he also spent much time in prayer, reading and reflecting. He used his time to bless others. Servant leaders redeem the time while waiting. They do what they can to develop their own gifts for future ministry. While waiting, servant

leaders may read, study, learn a new skill or sharpen an old one. Instead of dreaming of what they will do in a future time, they redeem the time.

Waiting times do not need to be wasted times. Like Paul, servant leaders can respond to waiting by building relationships, using their gifts and redeeming the time. Afterward, we may see these as some of the most fruitful times of our lives. Wait well!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. If I am currently in a period of waiting:
What opportunities to build new relationships is God providing at this time?

What relationships can I strengthen at this time?

In what ways can I continue to exercise my gifts during this time of waiting?

How might this experience strengthen my gifts?

How can I redeem this time to grow and develop as a person?

2. If I am not currently in a period of waiting:
What did I learn from a previous experience of waiting?

What will I do differently, as a result, the next time I am waiting?



43. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO REST

Many leaders know how to work hard; only a few know when it is time to rest. Yet rest is a part of God's plan for all leaders. Creation introduced a rhythm of day and night. The concept of a weekly Sabbath rest was also introduced in the creation and repeated often throughout Scripture. Jesus taught His disciples an important lesson in the following account. *"The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place"* (Mark 6:30-32). At the time of this story, the disciples had gone out for a time of ministry and accomplished many things. There were *"many people coming and going."* It was an exciting time with signs of activity all around. Every leader dreams of this time when there are many positive indicators of growth. But instead of asking the disciples to work harder, Jesus led the disciples away from the work to a quiet place to rest! In doing so, He reminds all servant leaders that there is a time to work hard

but also a time to rest. Why do servant leaders need rest?

Rest refreshes. The disciples had completed a stressful time of labor and there was no end in sight. They were tired and needed to rest. Rest refreshes us physically, spiritually and emotionally. Our physical bodies need a time of rest after activity. A good night of sleep refreshes our physical body. We can ignore this for a brief time, but finally, our bodies demand rest. Rest refreshes our spirit by taking us away from the demands of work that drain our spiritual energy. Rest allows us time to reconnect with God at a deep level. Rest also allows us to be refreshed from the intensity of emotion that comes as we interact with many people. Issues that disturb us look so different after we have a good night of sleep or a time away to rest. Servant leaders acknowledge their need to be refreshed and accept the call to rest.

Rest refocuses. The disciples were nearly overwhelmed with the needs of the crowd and needed some time away to allow them to refocus their attention on the most important activities. Rest allows us to refocus our attention on the things that are most important. Servant leaders use rest as a time to think and reflect, to assess priorities and current activities. They are able to refocus with clarity after a time of rest. They welcome rest because they acknowledge their own tendency to be busy doing the wrong things.

Rest reminds. The disciples needed a reminder that the work of God would go on without them. When leaders are busy with a lot of activity it is easy to believe that they are indispensable. It is easy for a leader to think that he or she is the reason things are happening. Rest reminds servant leaders that they are not indispensable. Not everything will get done and not everything must be done. Visionary leaders easily believe that more work is the way to great achievement. Rest reminds servant leaders that they are human and cannot keep going all the time. Servant leaders

welcome rest because they know they need another reminder of who they are and who they are not.

The example of Jesus teaches servant leaders that rest will not happen automatically; it must be planned intentionally. All leaders need time to rest and Jesus models the way. We would do well to listen to Him as He says to us, *“Come with me...and get some rest.”*



For further reflection and discussion:

1. When I do not get adequate rest, how is my leadership impacted?

What people are most affected?

How does lack of rest impact me emotionally?
Spiritually? Physically?

2. What plans do I have to get adequate rest?

Have I considered what I need to do daily,
weekly, yearly?

If not, what is God inviting me to do to begin?

3. Do those I lead have time for adequate rest?

Am I encouraging them, like Jesus, to stop and
rest, or do I keep expecting them to do more and
more?

What needs to change?



44. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO SPEAK UP

Leaders talk! But servant leaders acknowledge that there is a time to talk and a time to be silent. In this chapter and the next, we'll look at when it is time to speak up and when it's time to shut up! A couple of verses about speaking will guide our thoughts.

"A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-- and how good is a timely word!" (Proverbs 15:23).

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29).

An *"apt reply"* is one that is appropriate or suitable in the situation. When it is appropriate and given as, *"a timely word,"* the impact is significant. Servant leaders speak up with the right words at the right time. They may pause, assessing the need and waiting for the right time. But when it is time, they speak up. Paul's instructions teach servant leaders that it's time to speak up in at least three situations.

It's time to speak up when we can build others up.
"...what is helpful for building others up." The words of a servant leader are to build and strengthen those who are

listening. The words are intended not to tear down but to lift others up. This does not mean that every word must be affirmative but each word must be helpful. If it is not helpful it is best not to speak it. Every leader has power in what they speak to either build or to destroy. Servant leaders look for ways to build others and when they see an opportunity they are quick to speak up. Keeping quiet means that the other person will not be built up.

It's time to speak up when we can meet a need of others. “...*according to their needs.*” Words are intended to meet a need in the listener. Instead, often leaders speak from their own need. When they feel a need to be recognized, they talk about their accomplishments. When they feel a need to be affirmed, they speak about their successes. When they have a need to seem powerful they communicate a compelling vision to change the world!

But servant leaders only speak up when they can meet the need of *the other* person. The need might be for encouragement. If so, the servant leader speaks words that bring life and strength to that person. The need might be an injustice that demands action. Servant leaders are not afraid to speak out and call for a response. This is not a time to be quiet! The need might be a correction. If so, the servant leader carefully, but courageously, speaks words to correct or rebuke. The need may be a physical need. To keep quiet is wrong; the servant leader will speak up and see what can be done to meet this need. Sometimes the servant leader speaks on behalf of the needs of others and advocates for them, raising the money or support that is needed. In all these situations, the focus of the servant leader is not on their own needs but the needs of others. If the leader is silent, a need will remain unmet.

It's time to speak up when others benefit. “...*that it may benefit those who listen.*” Servant leaders seek always to add value to others, they want the listener to benefit. When they have something beneficial to say, they speak up

loud and clear! If they can't benefit the other, they recognize that it is time to be quiet. When followers need motivation, the leader shares the vision and everyone benefits as they move forward together. If the leader keeps quiet, no one benefits. When a servant leader speaks an "*apt reply*," others benefit.

In all three situations, the servant leader's focus is on 'others' not on self. If your focus is on the other and you can build them up and meet their needs, it's time for you to speak up so they will benefit!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. What percentage of my talking builds others up?

What needs to change and how will I learn new ways of talking?

2. Is the focus of my speaking on myself or on others?

What is the result in my life, relationships, and leadership?

3. Evaluate a recent conversation you had with a close friend. How much of the time in that conversation was I focused on the needs of that friend?

What was the result?

What difference would it make if I was able to focus more on their needs?

4. Anticipate a conversation you expect to have in the next few days. What are the needs of the person with whom I will talk?

In what way can I meet that need with my words?



45. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO SHUT UP

Leaders talk! But servant leaders acknowledge that there is a time to talk and a time to be silent. In the last chapter we examined when it is time for a leader to speak up. Now, we'll consider when it is time to shut up! Servant leaders know it's time to shut up in at least three situations.

It's time to shut up when we don't have anything helpful to say. *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen* (Ephesians 4:29). Paul's instruction is to say, "*only what is helpful.*" Every word from a leader should contribute something positive to the needs of another. The implication is that when we don't have anything of value to contribute, the best thing to say is nothing! Oh that more leaders would contribute silence to conversations! Obedience to this verse would immediately reduce the volume of words spoken. Servant leaders learn to pause before they speak and ask themselves if what they are prepared to say will benefit the listener. They acknowledge that if they can't contribute positively to a need or situation, it's best to remain quiet.

It's time to shut up when we should be listening. *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry* (James 1:19). James commands that we should be, “*quick to listen,*” and “*slow to speak.*” Many leaders reverse the order. They talk quickly and only listen occasionally! Servant leaders recognize that it's not possible to listen and talk at the same time. So they consciously seek to stop talking and listen to the other person. Listening to another person shows that we value them and what they think. Listening is an act of serving. Our listening skills would improve if we just stopped talking sometimes and focused on what another person is saying. Try this with your spouse or children! Servant leaders close their mouths when it is time to listen.

It's time to shut up when we have talked too much. *When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise* (Proverbs 10:19). To stop talking is difficult for leaders. They have a vision and want to move forward. They know what needs to happen and are quick to share this with others. But the writer of Proverbs warns that many words inevitably lead to sin. When leaders keep talking after they say all they know, they begin to share falsehoods and rumors. When they keep talking after they have good things to say about others, they begin to speak negatively about them. In addition, when a leader talks too much others cannot talk! This happens even if what the leader is saying is good. Talking too much devalues others by not allowing their thoughts and opinions to be shared. Servant leaders do not focus on themselves, but on others. They show value to others by encouraging them to speak. They are willing to shut up so that others may speak. They carefully guard their tongue against speaking too many words.

All leaders use many words. But servant leaders know that there is a time to speak up and a time to shut up. They

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learn that there are times when the best thing they can do is keep their mouth shut. When it is that time, they serve others by keeping quiet!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Do I naturally talk too much or too little?

What is the impact of this on my leadership?

2. How much of my speaking is actually helpful to those who are listening?

3. How well do I honor others by listening to them?

4. In what situations do I tend to talk too much?

What does this reveal about my heart?

What is God inviting me to do to change?

5. Are there persons to whom I need to apologize for the words I have spoken to them?

When will I take this step?



46. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO ENCOURAGE

Think of a person who has encouraged you in your life. How has the encouragement you received helped you to continue on your journey?

Everyone needs encouragement, even leaders. Servant leaders recognize that there is a time to encourage others and they deliberately work to meet that need. Two verses from the writer of Hebrews help us reflect on the power of encouragement. *“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 3:13; 10:25).

Servant leaders consider these verses and find time to encourage others in three ways.

It's time to encourage deliberately. Both of these verses use the command, *“encourage one another.”* Since encouraging others is a command it is within our power to do so. It may or may not come easily for your personality, but no leader is exempt from the command to encourage others. No leader should say, “I can't encourage others.” A

command also means that we need to be deliberate about obedience. Find a way to make it a part of your daily or weekly agenda. You may choose to write a note of encouragement to someone on a weekly basis. You may choose to speak a daily word of encouragement to your spouse or child. You may need to set a reminder on your phone or put a note in your calendar to deliberately build this habit in your leadership. Do it deliberately! Servant leaders are deliberate about encouraging others because they recognize that people need encouragement and they are willing to meet this need. For a servant leader, this is not an act of manipulation; it is a means of serving another by bringing out the best in that person.

It's time to encourage daily. *"Encourage each other daily..."* Encouragement is not something servant leaders do on a yearly or monthly basis; it is to be a daily part of their leadership. Servant leaders acknowledge that people need regular doses of encouragement. They gladly serve others by daily providing encouragement. When it comes to encouragement, there is never a time to shut up! There are times when correction is needed but even then, a servant leader will gently encourage the person to move in the right direction. If you are not sure if it is time to encourage someone, consider the verse which says we should encourage others *"as long as it is called today."* So, if it is today as you read this, it's time to encourage someone! Servant leaders make encouragement a daily habit.

It's time to encourage doubly. The writer indicates that as we move closer to the end of time encouragement should be done *"more and more."* Why? Because no one gets too much encouragement and there is no danger of an overdose! Servant leaders want to bring out the best in others and see their team continually move forward. So they increase the amounts of encouragement. To a daily dose of encouragement servant leaders add more. They look for ways to recognize and reward outstanding efforts

of those on their team. As they do so servant leaders build a culture of encouragement on their team that produces great rewards.

Be encouraged! Your efforts to be a servant leader like Jesus will reap a reward. Don't give in to doubt and discouragement. Keep up the fight. Your work in the Lord is not in vain. Be encouraged, and pass it on, it's time to encourage someone right now!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Does my team see me as an encouraging person?

Why or why not?

2. Am I consistent with my encouragement in different environments, for example at work and at home?

If not, why not and what needs to change?

3. Does my culture make it easy or difficult to encourage others?

How does this impact my leadership?

What would Jesus do to encourage others in my context?

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4. Is my ability to encourage others growing over time?

Have I taken steps to be deliberate about encouraging others?

Have I progressed to be able to do it daily?

Can I increase to “more and more”?

5. Who around me needs encouragement today?

What can I do to meet that need?

6. As a leader, I am called to encourage others. What do I do to stay encouraged myself so that I can serve others by encouraging them?



47. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO CONFRONT

Encouragement is always needed and usually greatly appreciated. But servant leaders also recognize that there is a time to confront. One of the best-known confrontations in scripture happened when God called the prophet Nathan to confront King David who had committed adultery and murder. Nathan first tells the king a story of a rich man who took advantage of a poor man and David instinctively reacted with anger towards the wicked action. Nathan responds,

“You are the man! Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.” Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die” (2 Samuel 12:7-15, portions).

Most of us will never need to confront a king, but Nathan's example shows all servant leaders how to confront an employee, friend, or colleague.

When it's time to confront do it carefully. Nathan's confrontation shows a lot of care. First, there was a clear wrong. In this case, God revealed to Nathan the wrong. Servant leaders choose the time to confront carefully making sure that there is an obvious wrong that needs correction. This may be a moral issue as it was with King David or it may be a wrong attitude or action. Secondly, Nathan's use of a story showed that he had thought carefully about what to say to King David. His confrontation was not an impulsive reaction to a wrong. It was carefully planned to provide the best chance of success. No one enjoys being confronted. Servant leaders recognize that it is time to confront when there is a clear wrong. They confront as carefully as possible with a genuine desire to serve the one being confronted.

When it's time to confront do it courageously. Confronting a king was a quick way to hasten your own funeral! God's command likely helped Nathan have courage, but I suspect that he knocked on the door with some degree of fear. He faced the difficult task of confronting someone in authority over him. Still, he confronted courageously. Many leaders realize that confrontation is needed but they don't have the courage to act. They may fear the loss of the relationship or an inappropriate response. They may wait, hoping that the issue will be resolved without confrontation. But when it's time to confront, servant leaders act courageously. They recognize that when confrontation is needed delay or failure to confront never helps the other person. Their love for the person who needs correction and their understanding of the reason God called them to leadership overcomes their fear. Servant leaders act with courage when it is time to confront.

When it's time to confront do it constructively. Nathan's purpose in the confrontation was to bring King David to repentance. Thankfully, David did respond with a repentant heart although there were still enormous consequences to his sin. Nathan's only purpose for this was to help David follow God more faithfully. Servant leaders do not confront out of anger or a desire for revenge. They don't do it to embarrass or shame the one who has done wrong. They know it's time to confront when it will help the other person grow and develop. Their purpose is constructive and they serve by confronting.

Confrontation may be one of the most difficult and painful tasks of leadership. But servant leaders follow Nathan's example and serve by confronting. When it's time for you to confront, do it carefully, do it courageously, and do it constructively.



For further reflection and discussion:

1. Reflect on the following scriptures which relate to confrontation.

2 Chronicles 26:16-19

Matthew 18:15-17

Galatians 2:11-14; 6:1

1 Corinthians 5:1-5

What do I learn from these examples and instructions?

2. What is my natural tendency when it comes to confrontation?

Do I do it with careful thought?

Do I have the courage to do it whenever needed?

Do I confront for the good of that person?

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3. Reflect on a recent time you confronted someone, or when you should have.

What did I do well?

What could have been done better?

How well did I follow the principles demonstrated by Nathan?

4. Are there any relationships or situations currently which need confrontation?

What is my plan of action?



48. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO SHARE VISION

Every leader has a vision for the future but many visions fail because the leader shares them at the wrong time. Some share it too early while others wait too long and the opportunity passes by. The best leaders, like Nehemiah, have a sense of timing that allows them to know when it's time to share the vision. Nehemiah had a vision to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem and already had the king's permission. He traveled several months to get there and I'm sure he was eager to begin right away. But he waited before sharing the vision until the time was right.

I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. By night I went out, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. There was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work. Then I said to

them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.” I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding” (Nehemiah 2:11-18, portions).

It’s time to share vision when you perceive the need.

Until this time, Nehemiah’s vision was based only on verbal reports from Jerusalem. He needed a first-hand look at the wall to understand the need. He did this at night, not wanting a crowd before it was time to share the vision. He saw the rubble and the place where his horse could not get through. Servant leaders want to see the need clearly before they share the vision. They wait to share vision until they understand the challenge.

It’s time to share vision when you have passion for the need. As Nehemiah looked at the situation, his passion for building the wall increased. Finally, it was burning in his heart and became his problem. He said, “You see the trouble we are in.” Servant leaders talk about problems “we have,” not problems “you have!” It’s time to share the vision when the problem belongs to you and you have passion for meeting the need. Servant leaders wait to share the vision until their heart is filled with passion.

It’s time to share vision when you have a plan to meet the need. Before Nehemiah left the king, he had a general plan of action. But now as Nehemiah was guiding his horse through the rubble, the plan for building the wall was taking shape in his mind. How many people were needed? Where were the challenging locations? What obstacles would arise? The time of exploration allowed him to refine his plan. He knew it was not time to share the vision before the plan was clear. Servant leaders wait to share the vision until they have a clear plan to call people for action.

It's time to share vision when you have the people to meet the need. Nehemiah looked carefully at the people. He took a very small group with him for the ride at night. But he also saw others and he knew they “would be doing the work.” But they did not yet know him and it was not time to share the vision before they trusted his heart. He knew relationships would make the vision become reality. So he first shared his own story with the people before sharing the vision. After he shared his story and called for action, the people were ready to follow. Servant leaders recognize that they must reveal their heart before they can ask people for their hand. Then it's time to share the vision.

Nehemiah took time to share his vision but did it well and the wall was built!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. What is the result if I share vision before I fully understand the problem?

What can I do to make sure I am seeing the issue clearly?

2. When is a time I shared a vision (or observed someone else) that did not bring good results?

Was the failure related in any way to incorrect timing in sharing the vision?

If so, what would have improved the timing?

3. What happens if I share vision before I am passionate about the problem?

48: It's About Timing: A Time to Share Vision

4. What is the result if the vision is shared before the plan of action is ready?
5. How can I involve others in helping to shape the vision and still keep the timing right?
6. Is there a vision emerging in my leadership right now?

How can I apply the principles from Nehemiah to help find the right time to share this vision?



49. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO ACCEPT A LOSS

No one loves to lose! No leader intends to lose. It's hard to accept loss, but there are some times that it is best to accept a loss and move on. King Amaziah learned this leadership lesson at the young age of 25.

Amaziah called the people of Judah together and assigned them according to their families to commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He then mustered those twenty years old or more and found that there were three hundred thousand men ready for military service, able to handle the spear and shield. He also hired a hundred thousand fighting men from Israel for a hundred talents of silver. But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, these troops from Israel must not march with you, for the LORD is not with Israel--not with any of the people of Ephraim. Even if you go and fight courageously in battle, God will overthrow you before the enemy, for God has the power to help or to overthrow." Amaziah asked the man of God, "But what about the hundred talents I paid for these Israelite troops?" The man of God replied, "The LORD can give you much more than that." So Amaziah dismissed the troops who had come to

him from Ephraim and sent them home. They were furious with Judah and left for home in a great rage. Amaziah then marshaled his strength and led his army to the Valley of Salt, where he killed ten thousand men of Seir (2 Chronicles 25:5-11).

In one of his first actions as a leader, Amaziah spent an enormous amount of money to hire men to help him fight. By some estimates, the value of 100 talents was close to 2 million US Dollars! No leader wants to lose that amount of money. But Amaziah teaches servant leaders that there is a time to accept a loss and change directions.

Accept a loss when the direction is wrong. Amaziah was moving in the wrong direction. The prophet warned him that he was heading in the wrong direction. Servant leaders acknowledge that no matter what they have invested in a goal if it is the wrong goal, it is time to accept the loss and move in another direction. If you have already moved too far in the wrong direction, don't keep investing time and energy, it's time to accept the loss and change. Accept the losses that come with that decision. Stubborn leaders refuse to turn around; servant leaders are willing to accept a loss to move in the right direction.

Accept a loss when the outcomes are wrong. For Amaziah to continue moving in the direction he was heading would have been disastrous. He would lose the battle he wanted to win and his investment would not produce the results he wanted. Many leaders keep doing things that do not produce results because they are not willing to pay the price of change. They continue to invest in programs, activities or ideas that are not productive. Servant leaders accept a loss when the outcomes do not warrant continued investment.

Accept a loss when the assumptions are wrong. Amaziah assumed that he could not win the battle with the men he had and it seemed reasonable to hire more. But in this case, his assumption was wrong! Some leaders press

forward assuming their assumptions are right. But servant leaders ask hard questions about their assumptions. They ask if they have all the information they need or if they based any part of their decision on an assumption that may be wrong. When servant leaders find their assumptions were wrong they accept the loss and change directions quickly.

Is it time for you to accept a loss and make a change? Or do you need to persevere? Use the following questions to guide your decisions.



For further reflection and discussion:

Read Amaziah's story in 2 Chronicles 25. Reflect on whether Amaziah learned his lesson well or not. What was the continued cost he paid for his decision to hire more troops?

What do his actions reveal about his heart?

What more can I learn from his leadership?

Think of a current situation you are facing in your life or leadership in which you have or will invest significant time, energy or resources. Is it time to accept the loss and move in a different direction or to persevere?

Reflect on the following questions to help you answer:

1. Is my direction the right direction?

How can I confirm that it not only seems right to me but it is right to God?

Does my goal bring glory to God or is it for my glory?

What are my true motives for moving forward?

Who can I talk with that can help guide me in discerning this issue?

2. What are the outcomes of this direction?

If the outcomes are still in the future, do the outcomes warrant the amount I will invest in the goal?

If I have been moving in this direction for some time, what results have I seen?

Are there other activities or programs in my organization or church that are not producing the needed results?

How do I measure the results?

Am I willing to pay the price of changing them?

What would be the cost of changing directions? (Consider not only financial cost but the cost in relationships, time, momentum, etc.)

3. What assumptions have I made about this direction?

How can I test whether these assumptions are true or false?

How would I know if these assumptions are incorrect?

Are there alternative solutions to the problem I seek to solve which I have not considered?

Who can help me see my own blind spots on this issue?



50. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO QUIT

Leaders never quit, right? Wrong! Great leaders know when it's time to persevere but they also know that there is a time to quit! Moses learned this lesson from his father-in-law.

The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are

to perform. But select capable men from all the people--men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain-- and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens (Exodus 18:13-21).

We often see this story as one that teaches about delegation and it does. But it is more than a lesson about delegation. It is about Moses needing to make tradeoffs which every leader must make. It was time for Moses to quit doing some things he was doing! When is it time to quit?

It's time to quit when the good keeps you from the best. Moses was serving the people as a judge. That's a good thing! But Jethro said, "*What you are doing is not good!*" This good act of service kept Moses from doing the best. Jethro reminded him that his calling was to represent the people to God. Only Moses could do this and it was the best thing he could do. To change from the good to the best, Moses needed to quit some things. He needed a tradeoff; quit the good to focus on the best. Servant leaders are willing to give up to go up. They are willing to quit the good to focus on the best.

It's time to quit when you are doing work others should do. Moses was doing a good job but Jethro reminds him that there are other "*capable men*" who could do what he was doing, especially judging the easier cases. Moses work was actually hindering the growth and development of these men! Moses needed to quit and allow them to learn to lead. Servant leaders are willing to quit what they do well for the sake of the growth of their team. They look for things that are not in their area of strength or gifting and pass them on to others. They also look at things they do well, but which others could also learn to do well. They quit so others may begin. They serve future leaders by quitting!

It's time to quit when you are sacrificing your health for the work. Jethro saw that Moses was wearing himself

out! He was working from early morning to late in the evenings. Some would have applauded his sacrifice, but Jethro tells Moses that it's time to quit! Servant leaders know that it's time to quit when they are sacrificing their health for the work.

Servant leaders reflect on Moses' example. They look for things they are currently doing which are outside their gifting, strengths or calling and they quit! They look for good things which keep them from their best and they quit those things! And when they recognize their bodies are suffering from the work, they find something to quit! What do you need to quit so you can move forward in your servant leadership?



For further reflection and discussion:

1. If Jethro was to watch me lead for a day, what might he tell me to quit?

2. Are there good things that I am doing which keep me from the best?

What are the things which only I can do on my team?

What things do I need to quit to focus on these?

3. What things am I doing which others on my team could do?

What keeps me from empowering them?

4. Are there ways that I am sacrificing my physical, mental or emotional health for my work?

What do I need to quit to find a healthy balance?



51. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO SOW

The writer of Ecclesiastes, in the passage on timing, says that there is “*a time to plant*” (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Farmers know that there is a time for sowing seeds in anticipation of a harvest. Leaders also recognize the value of sowing. Leaders “*sow*” ideas in their own minds and plant them in the minds of others. They invest time and energy in a vision or dream that God is calling them to pursue long before they see results. They do not sit around and dream of a harvest, they sow strategically. Servant leaders realize that these seeds will take time to develop but they sow carefully and deliberately. They are willing to invest in the present with the hope of a future harvest. Isaiah uses the analogy of farming to teach servant leaders important lessons on when it is time to sow.

When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way (Isaiah 28:24-26).

It's time to sow when the season is proper. No farmer would waste seed by planting in the wrong season. There is a growing season in every climate which determines the best time for planting. The farmer starts plowing soon before the time of planting. In the same way leaders watch the seasons. They observe changes that are happening around them. They see and seize opportunities that unfold. As they observe what is happening they realize it's time to invest in a future harvest. For a business leader the investment may be in a new product or service. A church leader may see the migration of a people group towards his location and recognize the opportunity to sow now for a future harvest. Servant leaders look ahead and realize when it is the season to sow.

It's time to sow when soil is prepared. The farmer plows before planting to prepare the soil. For leaders this preparation is a time to think and plan, listen to God's voice, and get the vision clearly. This is a time for leaders to invest much in their own growth and development. This preparation happens quietly, out of the limelight but is critical for a good harvest. Servant leaders carefully prepare themselves before sowing. They take time to build their leadership capacity in view of what is ahead.

It's time to sow when the seed is planned. Isaiah mentions several different types of seeds, each carefully chosen by the farmer. They consider the soil conditions and desired outcome. They plant a variety of seeds, knowing that some crops will do better than others but not always knowing which one will grow the best. They plant different seeds, not knowing which will be the most productive. They plant wisely, but generously! Farmers, and servant leaders, plan before sowing! They reflect on the outcomes they desire and decide what seed is needed to bring a harvest.

It's time to sow when the sower is perceptive. Isaiah says that it is God who guides the farmer and teaches him.

Servant leaders must be perceptive to what God is saying before they will be able to know that it's time to sow. Servant leaders seek God's insight to determine the season they are in. They ask for His help in preparing the soil and knowing what seed to plant. They seek His guidance on the plan of action. When they know these things, they realize it's time to sow and they invest much time and energy into planting.

Servant leaders sow carefully and wisely. They examine the season and prepare themselves. They plan properly and listen prayerfully. They don't expect an immediate harvest; they understand this is a time for sowing. If you are in a season of sowing, plant well...harvest time is coming! We'll look at the time to harvest in the next chapter.



For further reflection and discussion:

What is the anticipated harvest in my leadership?
(When you have a clear picture of what your desired outcomes are, consider the following questions on sowing or planting.)

1. What season am I in as a leader?

What do I see around and ahead that indicates the season that I am in?

Is this a season in my leadership in which I should focus on planting?

2. What needs to be prepared in my leadership before planting can take place?

Have I clarified my own vision?

What has God called me to do?

Do I have a clear sense of my own strengths and weaknesses?

Do I have a good plan for my own personal growth as a leader?

51: It's About Timing: A Time to Sow

3. Before I invest my time and energy, have I planned well?

What are the 'weeds' that might destroy my plan?

Have I considered other options?

Am I investing with enough diversity so that even if one does not produce; another can succeed?

4. Am I perceptive to how God is guiding me before I sow?

How have I confirmed His direction?

What do I need to do to move with confidence that He is guiding me?



52. IT'S ABOUT TIMING: A TIME TO HARVEST

In the last chapter we examined when it is time to sow or plant. There is a time to plant and a time to harvest. Every farmer plants with the expectation of a harvest to come. Every leader plants with the anticipation that there will be a time when they will reap the fruit of their labor. Paul encourages servant leaders to look forward to a time of harvest in his letter to the Galatian church.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:7-10). Paul informs servant leaders to expect a harvest when they have done three things well.

It's time to harvest when we have planted carefully. A good harvest is dependent on proper planting. Good seeds will produce a good harvest while bad seeds will result in the wrong results. A leader who plants *"to please his sinful nature"* cannot expect a good harvest. Servant

leaders recognize that motives are as significant as actions. If they work hard to achieve a vision that is selfish they cannot expect God's blessing on the results. The external actions may be good but the motives are wrong. A business leader whose primary goal is to make money cannot expect a spiritual harvest. A church leader who is most concerned about building a name for themselves cannot expect God's blessing on the results. It may take a long time before the results are evident, but servant leaders carefully examine what they are planting before they expect positive results.

It's time to harvest when we have pruned continuously. Planting is always the first step but every farmer carefully tends the crop as it grows. The farmer doesn't sit around and simply watch the crop grow. Instead he weeds and waters as needed to ensure a harvest. For some crops pruning is required. Paul refers to this as the "*doing good*" which comes before the time of reaping. Servant leaders continually examine their own lives to discover "weeds" that need to be removed, attitudes that need to be changed, or motives which are wrong. They observe what is happening in their own hearts as well as those around them. They are willing to do the hard work of "pruning" to remove anything that hinders a good harvest. Servant leaders pay careful attention to the condition of the crop recognizing that some areas may need additional water or fertilizer. They work with God to strengthen the crop in their hands and acknowledge that this is a continuous process, not a one-time event.

It's time to harvest when we have persevered courageously. Paul promises that "*at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*" When the right seeds have been planted and the crop has been properly tended, the harvest is only a matter of time. In the realm of leadership, we may not always know how long it will take but perseverance is always needed before the harvest. Servant leaders recognize that they cannot control the

timing of the harvest, but they can courageously persevere! They do not allow setbacks or delays to make them give up. They anticipate the harvest, but they do not try to force it to happen.

Every leader looks forward to harvest time! Servant leaders focus on doing what they can do, planting the right seeds and nurturing the crop. The expectation of the harvest keeps them going. May you experience the joy of a bountiful harvest in your own leadership!



For further reflection and discussion:

1. What “seeds” have I been sowing as a leader?

Will these “seeds” produce the results I desire?

2. Have I experienced any “harvest” in my leadership which is not what I wanted to see?

If so, what does that indicate about the seeds I planted?

3. What are my motives for accomplishing my vision?

Are they primarily about me or about accomplishing God’s purposes in my leadership?

What harvest will my current motives produce?

52: It's About Timing: A Time to Harvest

4. What are the “weeds” that have grown up in my own life and leadership?

What will it take to “prune” or remove these hindrances to a good harvest?

What kind of leader am I becoming?

What is the condition of those around me who are also working with me towards a harvest?

5. In what ways am I tempted to give up the work of planting and pruning as a leader?

How does the anticipated harvest keep me going?

EPILOGUE

After 52 signposts on the journey you have made a lot of progress, moving with each step towards the goal of becoming a leader like Jesus! Congratulations!

The journey is long, but every step in the right direction is an important part of God's plan for your life. Every step in the right direction has consequences that impact your future leadership.

Around the corner are more steps that you will take as you continue in leadership. My prayer is that you will take each one with the guidance of God's Holy Spirit who works in and through you to accomplish His purposes in our world. One life at a time and one leader at a time God works to bring all people into a relationship with Him. Servant leaders have the privilege of partnering with Him to impact the lives of many others. May His Kingdom come and His will be done in my life and yours as it is done in Heaven!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Byler has a passion to see church leaders grow and develop into mature, Christ-like leaders. He is committed to developing servant leaders with a heart for the Great Commission through his role as the Global Leadership Developer in Global Disciples. He lived in Thika, Kenya for 13 years and currently resides in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA. He and his wife Loice are the parents of three children. He has experience as a pastor, has authored several books and writes a bi-weekly eZine, “Reflections for Servant Leaders.” (Subscribe on his website, www.LeadersServe.com)

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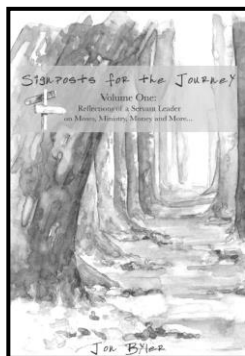
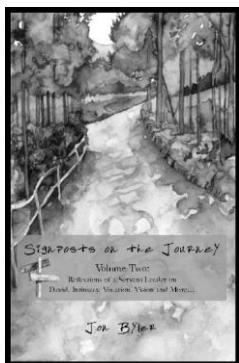
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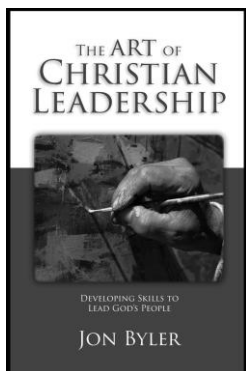
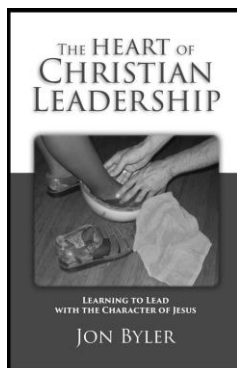
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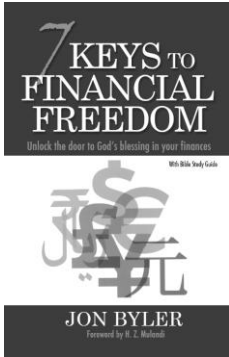


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