



BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

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Wednesday Noon Bible Study

August 5, 2026

SERMON SERIES

“Serving in HD (High Definition)”

INTRODUCTION

"A good leader motivates and mobilizes others to accomplish a task or to think in a certain way that is for the benefit of all concerned. A good servant-leader is one whose primary purpose for leading is to serve others by investing in their development and well-being for the benefit of the common good. A good Christian servant-leader serves God through investing in others who together accomplish a task for God's glory."

"The leadership about which Jesus speaks is of a radically different kind from the leadership offered by the world. It is a servant leadership-to use Robert Greenleaf's term-in which the leader is a vulnerable servant who needs the people as much as they need him or her. . . a leadership which is not modeled on the power games of the world, but on the servant-leader, Jesus, who came to give his life for the salvation of many." ~ Henri J. M. Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus.

I believe that the epitome of servant leadership is **Jesus Christ**. He gives the example in Mark 10:45 when he says, "For even the Son of man didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Before we can move into **LEADERSHIP**, we must learn how to **SERVE!**

I believe that in order to be an effective leader you must be able to **serve others**. Qualities such as kindness, forgiveness, patience, love and self-control should be evident through any Christian's life and especially in those that aspire to lead.

Although there are many Christian qualities that should set apart any Christian from his or her secular counterpart, there is one particular quality that Jesus manifested with grace and dignity. Ironically, the most powerful man who ever lived became the most humble, servant leader of all. Reminding us of this uncommon leadership quality of Jesus, Philippians 2 encompasses what it really means to exhibit true servant leadership.

A leader will do what he can for those that follow him/her. That is why as a Pastor I have adopted the motto of "Having a heart like Jesus Christ." (Phil. 2:5) Christ gives us the example in that he is the Son of God, and He is divine but yet He served others.

We should carefully follow His example. Humility was the particular quality that set Jesus apart as He took on the sins of all mankind and humbled himself to death on a Roman cross. Philippians reminds us that He was God, yet He took on the form of a human in order to become the sacrifice for our sins. The great humility that He displayed throughout His earthly life and particularly His death is unparalleled

in history. Yet, it continues to provide us with the supreme example of a servant leading for any who aspire to be like Him. In Philippians, it does encourage us to have the same attitude and aspiration as Jesus Christ in relation to the world.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

In the secular world, Robert Greenleaf is considered the father of servant leadership. In 1977 Robert Greenleaf described servant leadership in this manner:

"It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead...The difference manifest itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons, do they grow while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"

Through extensive work with Greenleaf, Larry Spears identified ten characteristics, which describe the essence of a servant leader. The characteristics are **listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community**. These same characteristics can be used to describe Christian Servant Leadership as well. Christian leaders need to be able to **listen to others, have empathy with others, pray and heal others, be aware of what is going on, persuade others to follow Christ, conceptualize, have foresight, be a steward, be committed to the maturity and growth of others** and help **build the Kingdom of God**.

Servant leadership is at the heart of Christian leadership.

Servant Leadership is different from servanthood. All Christians, not just leaders, are called to be servants, serving each other, following Jesus' example in washing his disciples' feet, and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Along with that call to servanthood is the need we each have to allow ourselves to receive from Jesus, just as he washed his disciple's feet. When Peter protested, Jesus told him, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.' (John 13:8 NIV)

Jesus is our servant/leader. In His ministry on earth, he beautifully fused together servanthood and leadership. He was essentially a leader, undoubtedly a servant. In his personality, Jesus displayed both characteristics. He was a servant. He was a leader. And with Jesus as our example, we are called to be servant/leaders.

The Bible presents servant leadership as God's preferred model of leadership. Jesus taught that true greatness is measured not by how many people serve you, but by how faithfully you serve others.

1. Jesus Christ — The Perfect Model of Servant Leadership.
2. Moses — A Shepherd Before a Leader.
3. Nehemiah — Leading by Serving.
4. Joseph — Serving Through Stewardship.
5. David — The Shepherd King.
6. Paul — A Servant of Christ.

7. Barnabas — The Encouraging Leader.
8. Ruth — Serving with Loyalty.
9. Boaz — Leadership Through Generosity.
10. Timothy — A Young Servant Leader.

A Biblical Definition of Servant Leadership

Biblical servant leadership is the God-honoring practice of humbly using one's God-given authority, gifts, and influence to glorify Christ by serving, developing, protecting, and empowering others according to God's Word rather than seeking personal power, recognition, or gain.

This definition reflects Jesus' own teaching:

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:43–45)

As we summarize SERVANT LEADERSHIP...

In the Christian realm, **ALL LEADERSHIP** should be servant leadership.

A common misconception among those who want to exercise a leadership role over others is that it comes with glory, power, and positions of honor. In fact, such a mistaken belief was the occasion for Jesus' words in the above passage. James and John had just asked Jesus to place them at His side when He assumed His throne in the kingdom to come. The other disciples became indignant at the arrogance of their request (Mark 10:41). And, as an object lesson, Jesus modeled the true servant style of leadership. He, the Lord incarnate, bent down and washed their feet, teaching them the true measure of leading by first serving others (John 13:12–17).

The word servant in Matthew 20:27 means "slave." Not every servant was a slave, but every slave was a servant. It is sad commentary in the church today that we have many celebrities but very few servants. There are many who want to "exercise authority" (Matthew 20:25), but few who want to take the towel and basin and wash feet. Paul reminds us that our attitude is to be like Christ's in that we consider others better than ourselves and do nothing out of vanity or selfishness. Rather, we look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3–4). In this sense, then, every Christian is a servant.

The focal point of servant leadership within the church is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12). This means, with Christ being the head of the church, the entire church body is served in the act of providing leadership. It's not just the church leaders who become acutely aware of their place at the foot of the cross but all those within the body of Christ. We all mutually submit ourselves to Jesus just as He was in submission to the Father. From a biblical perspective, servant leadership frees the church of the abuse of power and coercion and promotes mutual respect and love for one another.

A servant leader seeks to invest himself in the lives of his people so that, as a whole, the church community is challenged to grow to be more like Christ. This is demonstrated in the leader's willingness to give of himself to meet the needs, but not necessarily the wants, of his people. Like a good parent, the true servant leader knows the difference between the needs of his spiritual children and their selfish wants and desires.

The bottom line to the application of servant leadership is that we don't emulate the examples of the world; our example is Jesus, who came as a servant. Therefore, our mission is to serve one another, to give of ourselves. Christ came to give His life. We are to give of our lives not only in service to Him but to our fellow man, including those in the church and outside it (Mark 12:31).

Reflection Questions Inspired by Jesus

Jesus asked penetrating questions that exposed the heart. Consider asking yourself:

- Would Jesus recognize His leadership style in me?
- Am I washing feet or seeking the highest seat? (John 13:1–17)
- Do I lead from the front only, or do I also serve behind the scenes?
- Is my leadership marked by authority or by love?
- If those I lead described my leadership in one word, what would it be?
- Am I known more for serving people than for being served?