

[506: The Drum Major Instinct](#)

It's been more than three years since I wrote anything about leadership and longer than that since I wrote about servant-leadership. That's way too long, so the next four weeks will be devoted to that topic.

I am going to Atlanta in a few weeks and I want to visit the [Martin Luther King Jr. Center](#) while I am there. I was looking at the Center's site the other day and the introduction included a portion of Dr. King's sermon entitled *The Drum Major's Instinct* from 1968. I quoted Dr. King last week and I was not intentionally doing research to include him again this week, but it happened. You can read the sermon [here](#) or read on and see only the portion that grabbed my attention.

THE QUOTE

The sermon was about our need to be out front, noticed and great. In his sermon, Dr. King said this concerning [Mark 10:39-45](#):

But that isn't what Jesus did; he did something altogether different. He said in substance, "Oh, I see, you want to be first. You want to be great. You want to be important. You want to be significant. Well, you ought to be. If you're going to be my disciple, you must be." But he reordered priorities. And he said, "Yes, don't give up this instinct. It's a good instinct if you use it right. It's a good instinct if you don't distort it and pervert it. Don't give it up. Keep feeling the need for being important. Keep feeling the need for being first. But I want you to be first in love. I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity. That is what I want you to do."

And he transformed the situation by giving a new definition of greatness. And you know how he said it? He said, "Now brethren, I can't give you greatness. And really, I can't make you first." This is what Jesus said to James and John. "You must earn it. True greatness comes not by favoritism, but by fitness. And the right hand and the left are not mine to give, they belong to those who are prepared."

And so Jesus gave us a new norm of greatness. If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That's a new definition of greatness.

And this morning, the thing that I like about it: by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.

THE CURE

Dr. King did not say this instinct to be out front was evil in and of itself. The problem is our tendency to believe that we somehow deserve to be out front or that we are better than others. The only antidote I know for the drum major instinct is the concept of servant-leadership. You and I are as susceptible as anyone to the arrogance and pride that comes from the human condition and especially from leadership power.

Join me in these next few weeks as we focus on how to be effective servant-leaders so that we do not use the power of purpose and goals for self-serving ends, but rather to serve others as Jesus would have us do. Until next week, meditate on this dilemma and commit yourself to be the kind of leader that reverses the

ugly trend in self-serving leadership that has been with us since the Garden of Eden. Then be ready to learn and grow into a drum major that leads people with integrity on paths of righteousness. Have a great week!

507: God is Secure

Last week we started a series on servant-leadership, which will continue for the next few weeks. This week I was reading a book and came across a stunning revelation that is pertinent to our discussion and, of course, could not wait to share it with you.

JOHN PIPER SAYS . . .

In John Piper's book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, he writes about Isaiah 64:4: "Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him." Piper went on to explain:

In other words, Isaiah is stunned that the greatness of God has the paradoxical effect that he does not need people to work for him but rather magnifies himself by working for them, if they will renounce self-reliance and "wait for him."

Isaiah anticipated the word of Paul in Acts 17:25, "God is not] served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." The uniqueness at the heart of Christianity is the glory of God manifest in the freedom of grace. God is glorious because he does not need the nations to work for him. He is free to work for them. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Missions is not a recruitment project for God's labor force. It is a liberation project from the heavy burdens and hard yokes of other gods (see Matthew 11:28-30).

Isaiah says that such a God has not been seen or heard of anywhere in the world. What Isaiah sees everywhere he looks are gods who have to be served rather than serve. For example, the Babylonian gods Bel and Nebo: "Bel bows down; Nebo stoops, their idols are on beasts and livestock; these things you carry are borne as burdens on weary beasts. They stoop; they bow down together; they cannot save the burden, but themselves go into captivity. Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from he womb; even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (Isaiah 46:1-4, cf. Jeremiah 10:5).

The difference between the true God and the gods of the nations is that the true God carries and the other gods must be carried. God serves; they must be served. God glorifies his might by showing mercy. They glorify theirs by gathering slaves. So the vision of God as one whose passion for his glory moves him to mercy impels missions because he is utterly unique among all the gods" (pages 55-56).

GOD IS SECURE

In other words, God is secure in who He is, so He is free to serve others. That is how He wants you and me to be. He does not want us to exercise our leadership by "gathering slaves" to our vision and way of thinking, but by serving the needs of others, empowering them to succeed as they carry out God's purpose for their lives. In other words, you must be a servant leader because that is the model our God provides, for He is a servant-leader extraordinaire.

Next week, we will look at servant-leadership as it was expressed in Jesus' life and ministry. In the meantime, you can read more of what I have written about servant-leadership on my [website](http://www.purposequest.com). This study is not just for you to learn new concepts, but to apply them to your life and leadership. Are you a servant-leader? Do you want to be? If so, it will require that you are secure in Him and in who He made you to be. You will have to learn that your leadership is not for your benefit but the benefit of others. That, my friend,

is not just a journey, it is a death process as you learn to pick up your cross, deny yourself daily and follow Him. Have a great week!

508: Jesus Was a Servant-Leader

If you are going to be a servant-leader, you need models and examples of how to lead, for most of the models available pay lip service to servant-leadership or are just flat out autocrats. Fortunately, we have someone who served as an example who can also empower and enable you to serve as you lead, and also lead as you serve. His name is Jesus.

JESUS WAS A SERVANT-LEADER.

Almost fifteen years ago, I read Robert Greenleaf's famous book, *The Power of Servant Leadership*. When I started reading, I couldn't put it down. Quite frankly, that book took my breath away (and still does). I have tried to read everything and anything on servant leadership since that time, and all of it has served to sharpen my leadership focus and teaching. I was surprised to find that most of the books on servant leadership were not written by church leaders, but rather business leaders. This surprised me, since I knew that Jesus initiated the servant leadership message. Yet somehow the servant-leadership message has escaped or circumvented the church for the most part. I determined at that point to introduce or reintroduce the message wherever and whenever possible.

To do this, I first reflected on what the Bible and Jesus had to say about servant leadership. More importantly, I studied what Jesus did as a servant leader. Here are some of my findings:

1. **Jesus had no official title or position.** He was called rabbi, which means teacher, yet he had no synagogue that he used as a base. He was an itinerate teacher in His three years of ministry work. Judas had to kiss Him in the Garden when he betrayed Jesus, otherwise the Romans would not have recognized who Jesus was, since he had no clothes or other signs of being the leader.
2. **Jesus did not build an organization.** Jesus had followers, but He never tried to formalize His network. He was content to teach, travel, heal and train leaders.
3. **Jesus did not recruit followers to a paid position.** Jesus recruited people to fulfill their purpose. He never promised a salary or benefits, and did not use money or perks as a means to maintain loyalty or demand compliance. Jesus never recruited anyone through guilt or manipulation, but through love.
4. **Jesus was content to teach.** Jesus influenced people by what He taught and how He lived. He did everything He could to deflect attention from Himself to God the Father, and never put pressure on anyone to follow Him. In fact, He discouraged some who wanted to do so. He sent them home to live their lives and share their testimony of He had helped them.
5. **Jesus never clarified who He was.** When people asked Jesus who He was, He asked them, "Who do you think I am?" He never took time to defend Himself from false accusations, but stayed focused on His purpose. He never said, "I am in charge here." He allowed people to figure that out for themselves.

Then I determined that I wanted to be a servant leader and lead like Jesus. I've seldom had a high position in any organization. As a pastor, I don't demand special privileges and don't require anyone to use a title when talking to me. I use my power to empower and serve others. I have an organization that allows me to teach through my books, personal appearances and website. No one is forced to follow my teaching; it is there for them to take or leave. The purpose message has influenced many because they have chosen to listen and apply the truth. I never imposed it on anyone and still don't.

I'M A SERVANT LEADER, TOO.

I've said all this to remind you of what my purpose statement is: *To create order out of chaos **without control***. My job is to influence as many people as I can with the message of purpose, productivity and servant-leadership. I must do that without expecting anything in return, except the joy of seeing lives changed and organizations impacted. Servant-leadership is the next great emphasis for leaders all over the world, especially those who call on the name of the Lord because Jesus is our model for leadership. I urge you to join me as together we fulfill our purpose, trusting in the Lord that how Jesus led will still work today. Let's form a powerful network of men and women who are committed to fulfill our purpose the way Jesus fulfilled His.

I have a great deal of material on my [website](#) that talks about servant leadership. I urge you in the weeks to come to study and then apply the servant-leadership principles in your family, life, work and ministry. Have a great week filled with purposeful service and I will have more for you next week on this critical topic!

509: The One and Only One

Have you discovered yet that servant-leadership isn't just inconvenient but a death process that requires you die to self and live for others. I prayed as a young believer that I would someday be like Timothy, who was the Apostle Paul's right hand man. I didn't want to be a right hand man, however, but was really praying that God would join me to a significant man and leader who would promote *my* ministry and stature. It was a selfish prayer but it sounded so spiritual.

Then one day I read a few verses about Timothy that changed my life. I have to warn you, however, that your life will be changed too once you see and embrace these verses. So don't read on if you don't want to be challenged or stretched. If you do, then these next few paragraphs will change your leadership style forever.

THE ONE AND ONLY ONE

The passage is found in Philippians 2:19-22:

But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.

What did I learn from those verse that changed my life?

1. **Timothy was of use to others.** Paul could send Timothy because he would encourage both the Philippians when he arrived and Paul when he returned. I determined to be more encouraging to my leaders and my peers.
2. **Timothy was the one and only.** Paul had no one else like Timothy. Paul worked with many great men, yet Timothy was unique. I made up my mind I would not follow the crowd where leadership was involved, but set myself apart, with God's help, to be like Timothy in heart and behavior.
3. **Timothy was unique because he was genuinely concerned.** Timothy was concerned for the interests of others *and* the interests of Jesus Christ. At one point in my life, I was only interested in others and to some extent Jesus for what they could do for me, and not what I could do for them.
4. **Timothy had proven his worth.** Timothy added value to the team of which he was a member. He didn't just show off or preach flashy sermons, but rather served Paul and the people. I determined that service was what God wanted me to emphasize as I led, and I have endeavored not just to serve the leader or those who would benefit me, but everyone as if I was serving Jesus directly.

TWO QUESTIONS

Paul only had one Timothy, which is remarkable. Paul worked with Silas, Titus, Luke, and Barnabas, but he didn't consider them in the same category as Timothy. That fact led me to ask two questions. **If Paul only had one Timothy, how many will I ever see?** There are only a few who can overcome self interests to come to a place of being genuinely interested in others. I lowered my expectations of others, trying to better understand human nature so that I could work with people more effectively.

The second and more important question was: **Could I be like Timothy?** I have put my own interests aside, but it is a hard process. Self-interest clings to me like cat hair to dark fabric, and putting others' interests ahead of my own is a death process. I have to die daily to my own will as I identify and serve the interests of others.

What do you see in those verses about Timothy and how can you apply them to your life? I would suggest you reflect on this passage in the coming week and then share your insights with my readers on the [site](#) where this entry is posted. Let's see how many Timothys we can raise up in this generation, who are genuine and who serve the interests of others. If there are no others, then I am still committed to be a Timothy myself. Have a great week!

Feel free to leave your comments on the [site](#) where this entry is posted.

[510: The Real Leader](#)

Have you ever noticed that the real leader in any group is not necessarily the one who has the title or highest rank? Often it is the one who exerts the greatest influence, for influence is always a better motivator of others than coercion or bribes, usually called financial rewards, bonuses or gifts.

We have been discussing servant-leadership the last few weeks and we want to continue this week by looking at a story from David's life before he was king. You will see that, while Saul was the leader in title, David was the leader in reality, but his service and leadership were not appreciated.

"WILL THEY STAND WITH ME?"

While King Saul was using his army to chase innocent David instead of fighting the Philistines, one of Israel's towns was in danger. David went to save this town, named Keilah, even though he put himself in danger of being attacked by Saul while he did so (You can read this story in its entirety in [1 Samuel 23](#)). David saved the day and the town, but then Saul heard where David was and decided to pursue and defeat David even though David had served him and Israel well.

If that wasn't bad enough, the residents of Keilah whom David has just saved, decided to side with Saul:

Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, and he said, "God has delivered him into my hands, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars." And Saul called up all his forces for battle, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod." David said, "Lord, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? Lord, God of Israel, tell your servant." And the Lord said, "He will." Again David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?" And the Lord said, "They will" (1 Samuel 23:7-12).

You may be a servant-leader in your situation but you do not receive the credit or rewards due your efforts. If that is the case, you understand what David experienced at this moment of betrayal and humiliation.

THE REAL LEADER

Now I ask you, who was the real leader of Israel? Was it David or Saul? Of course, it was David, but the army and the people sided with Saul because he had the title and power. All David had was the desire to serve his people, and of course the attention and favor of God. Servant-leaders do the right things whether or not they are rewarded. They exercise influence because they are humble and dedicated to serving others. Authoritarian leaders serve their own interests, which often include those interests of their family and friends.

What kind of leader do you want to be? Do you want the title and all the "perks" that go with it, or are you content to serve the interests of others, using your power to empower them? Are you prepared to continue doing that even if those you serve do not recognize or appreciate your efforts? The goods in 1 Samuel 23 was that God was watching and that is still the good news - God is mindful of your situation. I urge you to continue to do good, to serve and lead, even if no one notices. In so doing, you will follow in the footsteps of many great leaders who have trusted God for their rewards while they did the best they could to serve others in their time of need. Have a great week!