

## ***Commanding Servanthood***

Dear Mark,

As pastors we are called servants of Jesus Christ, and yet we are told to be leaders as well. Well, which is it, servants or leaders? It may sound like an oxymoron, but the truth is that we are both, and our role is called *servant leadership!* But how can a servant lead and a leader serve? When Jesus said, *Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant*, what was He talking about?

As a young minister, I was told that a servant knows when he is leading by looking over his shoulder and seeing if someone is following. Leadership is influence. Chuck Swindoll calls leadership *inspiring influence*. A good leader influences for good, and a bad leader for bad.

What is it exactly that influences people? The corporate world tells us that it is power and authority. Many of those we call strong leaders are also strong personalities with great personal drive and ambition. Many of these visionary models are aggressive, take control, get-out-of-my-way-or-get-run-over kind of people. For those of us who did not have Attila the Hun for a hero, we were left quite discouraged about our own leadership potential. And yet the words of Jesus still echo in my mind, *whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant.*

The Apostle John warned us of the Diotrefes among us who *love to be first*. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche spoke of the *will to power* as a natural human drive. It is human to want to drive others, and yet we were called to be shepherds, not ranchers. I don't believe cattle or people like to be driven.

If fear and intimidation are tools used to create followers, people may yield to our influence for a season, but with the residue of resentment. When people begin to feel used, we have lost them and any influence we had on them. The late J. Oswald Sanders in his classic work *Spiritual Leadership* reminds us that the Bible says, *Moses, my servant not Moses my leader*.

Reflect for a moment on what the word *servant* means. It speaks of one who lives for the benefit of another. Take a good look at Philippians 2:3-4:

*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but also for the interest of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.*

Now ask yourself this: Whose interest is important to you? Some leaders appear to have visions of grandeur, desiring a reverence and allegiance belonging only to God. But servants following the pattern of our Lord come to *serve, not to be served*. They seek to benefit others, not themselves.

Servant leadership begins, therefore, with an understanding that people have been given to us to steward. God created people; people created things. Things are to be used, but people are to be stewarded. When people feel used by you rather than by God, they don't feel served. When people feel valued,

trusted, supported, respected, advised, challenged, rewarded and appreciated, they feel served. In other words, when people feel loved, they feel served.

Pastoral leadership comes down to understanding the difference between formal and informal authority. The essence of authority is the right to make decisions that affect the lives of others. Formal authority is when people respond to what you say because of your position. All authority usually begins with position, but this is not the goal of the servant leader. The goal of the servant leader is to have people respond to what is said because of whom he or she is—a servant.

The ultimate question then is how do we best serve those who are under our authority?

Initially, the word authority is a bit repulsive to many because it sounds like an authoritarian dictator, and in many cases it is. But according to the Scriptures, authority implies headship, which is not lordship. Our people have only one Lord they worship, and we aren't Him. Headship is the word *kephale* and speaks of the responsibility of providing something. Loving headship provides two things: *protection* and *honor*. As the Father provided protection and honor for His Son, so we are to provide these for those under our care. When our people feel protected and honored by us, they feel loved. When we protect our people from anything that could harm them, whether it be false doctrine or any kind of deception, they feel loved. When we recognize the giftedness that God has given them and employ them into ministry, we honored them.

Mark, when our people see us approaching, the first thing that should come into their mind is our love, and that we are there to help them become everything God created them to be. It comes down to this, we as pastors exist to glorify God by helping His children become great in His Kingdom. Remember these believers are not there for you . . . you are there for them. It is the powerful influence of serving people that changes their lives for usefulness to the Kingdom. This is how a servant leads, and this is how a leader serves!

Under the Same Wings,

Darryl DelHousaye

Scottsdale Bible Church, Scottsdale, Arizona

*Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave*

*—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served,*

*but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

*Matthew 20:26-28*