

The **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**
***“Barnabas”* Edition**

Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

Lesson Ten: Serving Others

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Lesson Ten: Serving Others

CORE VALUE: An APPROACH to leadership characterized by denial of self and serving others.

BIBLE VERSE(S): Philippians 2:1-8, John 13:1-17, and James 1:27

ONE SIMPLE TRUTH: Serving others as a leader starts by humbly setting aside personal agendas and by initiating acts of service that meet the real needs of those who follow.

APPLICATION: Get to know the real needs of those you lead and initiate the appropriate acts of service to meet them.

Jesus approached leadership as a servant. Jesus rejected the world's authoritative approach of leadership and commanded his followers to do likewise. Serving others starts within a person's heart. It requires humility and the setting aside of one's personal ambition. Serving requires a leader to place the needs of others ahead of one's self-centered agendas. Everyone has the choice in life to be other centered or self-centered. Choosing to serve others requires a person to orient his or her heart on God and others instead of self.

Basic nature leads humans to protect self-interests first. The natural orientation of a person's heart points toward self. Self-seeking people order their lives to satisfy the needs and desires of their heart even at the expense of others. When a person comes to know Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior, he or she becomes free from the bondage of a prideful and self-oriented life. Union with Christ makes a selfless life possible; however, one must make this choice daily. The temptation to continue a self-centered life

remains after conversion. The Apostle Paul encouraged the saints in Philippi to live a life focused on serving others based on their union with Christ.

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:1-4 NIV)

Observations of the Biblical Text¹ (Philippians 2:1-4)

Paul opens this passage of scripture by reminding the saints at Philippi of three aspects of a Christian’s faith. List them below:

1. Christians receive encouragement from: _____
2. Christians receive comfort from: _____
3. Christians have fellowship from: _____

Based on a Christian’s union with Christ Paul exhorted the saints at Philippi to “Do nothing out of _____ or _____”

Paul went on to encourage them to “... in humility _____”

Whose interest should Christians look out for besides their own? _____

The Apostle Paul also encouraged the Philippians to adopt the same attitude displayed by Christ Jesus. Read Paul’s description of Jesus’ attitude and answer the following questions.

- ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
- ⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
- ⁷ but made himself nothing,

¹ Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader’s Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
(Philippians 2:5-8 NIV)

Observations of the Biblical Text (Philippians 2:5-8)

Whose attitude did Paul encourage the Philippians to imitate?

Although by nature Jesus Christ is God, to what did Paul liken Jesus' earthly nature?

To take on the nature of a servant, what did Jesus choose to do to himself?

How far was Christ willing to go as a servant to others?

Interpretive Questions (Philippians 2:1-8)

In what ways might selfish ambition negatively impact a leader's relation with those he or she leads?

In what ways might vain conceit negatively impact a leader's relation with those he or she leads?

What impact might a leader have on those he or she leads when his or her actions display an attitude of being no better than them and putting their interests first?

How can a person get a clear understanding of Christ's attitude?

What do you think it means that Christ did not grasp his equality with God?

What characterized the nature of a servant that Christ became?

Paul reminded the saints at Philippi that they had experienced the Christ's love when they came to know Christ. Their union with Christ provides the basis upon which Paul teaches a Christian should imitate Jesus' as a servant. A Christian's fellowship with the Holy Spirit empowers and makes such a life possible.

Followers of Jesus Christ should imitate his attitude in all respects. Understanding Jesus' attitude requires study of God's Word. The focus of this study involves Jesus' choice to adopt the very nature of a servant. Jesus exists fully divine and fully human! While the manner may be a mystery to us the reality remains fixed that Jesus willingly let go of his Godly nature and humbled himself to take on the nature of man. Jesus carried his commitment to serve others to the point of dieing on a cross. Paul challenges all followers of Jesus Christ to adopt this attitude of a servant. This attitude will require us to let go of self and humbly sacrifice our selfish desires for the sake of others.

Paul used the Greek term *doulos* for "servant" in Philippians 2:7. Jesus used the same term for "slave" in Mark 10:44. (See previous lesson: Two Approaches to Leadership) In the opening verse of his letter to the saints in Philippi, Paul identified himself and Timothy as *douloi Christou* or servants of Christ. If followers of Christ are expected to live as a "*doulos*," one must understand what it means to live as a servant. A *doulos* essentially describes a person who has relinquished self-interests and serves the will and interests of another. Christians should serve Jesus Christ and others with this attitude.

We can ask ourselves what this might look like for a leader. Paul gives us some insight in Philippians 2:1-4. We should do nothing out of selfish ambition. Vain conceit should never motivate our priorities and actions. A leader must humble oneself! Leaders must view others with all humility. The leader that views others humbly will see him or herself as no better than one's followers. As we lead others, we must look out for their interests. We cannot fall into the temptation of only considering how our own interests are protected and served by our decisions and actions. The leader who adopts these attitudes in relation to others, especially those he or she leads, will be on the way to imitating Christ's attitude of a servant.

Pride and selfish ambition stop a leader from becoming a servant to others. Paul encourages humility. A humble attitude provides a window through which a leader can properly view oneself in relation to others. Too lofty a view distorts the reality that in God's eyes, a leader is no more important than those he or she leads. I believe God allows hardship in life to break our pride and create a humble attitude in our heart. Humility reduces our self-dependence and increases our dependence on God. Arrogance on the part of a leader works as a demotivator to one's followers. Humility, on the other hand, inspires and empowers others to follow. Humility is a starting point for becoming a servant.

Another step to becoming a servant of others is letting go of our own personal ambitions and agendas. A leader must stop framing every decision and action by how it impacts oneself. The pursuit of selfish ambition as priority one by a leader quickly spoils the will of those who follow. Selfish ambition also serves to demotivate others. People do

not want to follow a leader who uses other people for his or her self-centered gains. To serve others, a leader must put the collective needs of one's follows ahead of self.

Leading as a servant requires humility of heart and a sincere desire to look after the needs of others, especially the needs of weak and helpless followers. James said that the evidence of a true follower of Jesus Christ can be seen in a person's actions towards vulnerable members of society and one's commitment to avoid the trappings of the world. Read James 1:27 and consider the following questions.

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (NIV).

Interpretive Questions (James 1:27)

Why do you think James encouraged Christians to look after the needs of orphans and widows? What characterizes a widow and an orphan, besides the obvious absence of a father figure?

Widows and orphans often live a vulnerable and defenseless existence. Women and children who lack a father to protect them often fall prey to others. Self-centered and ambitious people use such defenseless individuals for their personal gain. Every organization has widows and orphans. These followers may not literally lack a father figure to protect them, but they are just as defenseless as widows and orphans. Every organization has individuals who struggle with a variety of personal and professional problems that leave them weak and defenseless. Part of leading as a servant involves

recognizing followers who resemble “widows and orphans” and protecting and looking out for their needs.

James also exhorted his readers to avoid the trappings of the world. Unfortunately, in their zeal to garner worldly success, many leaders use the widows and orphans of an organization as a rung on the ladder of their leadership ascension. Sadly, even leaders who claim to follow Jesus Christ are guilty of using others as stepping stones on the path towards “success.” To make matters worse, today’s materialistic Christian community reinforces this self-promoting behavior by suggesting that worldly success metrics equate to God’s blessings. “Christian” leaders have mistakenly adopted an attitude that if they are achieving worldly success, then they must be obeying God and experiencing His blessing. The average Christian layperson conveniently ignores the true metric of God’s pleasure and blessing as defined by passages such as James 1:27.

Revisit Philippians 2:1-7 for a moment. One’s union with Christ makes possible the adoption of Jesus’ attitude and actions as a servant. Jesus’ love for us opens the door to love others. Selfish ambition and vain conceit can be replaced with humility and a concern for others when we relinquish control of our lives to the Holy Spirit. Transformation into a leader who approaches leadership as a servant begins with an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and cannot be separated from this bond. Jesus modeled what leading as a servant looks like to his twelve apostles. John chapter 13 records Jesus’ greatest example of how a leader serves others. Read John 13:1-17 and answer the following questions.

Observations of the Biblical Text (John 13:1-17)

What time did Jesus know was at hand?

What was Jesus about to show his apostles?

In verse three, what three things did John say Jesus knew?

1.

2.

3.

What did Jesus do to show his disciples the full extent of his love for them?

What two titles did Jesus say described his relationship to his disciples?

How did Peter react when Jesus approached him to wash his feet?

Given that Jesus, their leader, had served them by washing their feet, what did Jesus tell his disciples to do?

Interpretive Questions (John 13:1-17)

What motivated Jesus to serve his disciples so humbly? Do you have this depth of relationship with those you lead?

What gave Jesus the peace and security to humbly serve others? How does this impact you as a leader?

Jesus set an example for his followers. What are some ways you can apply this lesson to where you lead others?

Commentary

In this passage, we learn much about Jesus as a leader who served others and his relationship with his followers. In this passage, Jesus models his approach to leadership as a servant. Paul suggested that a Christian's inspiration to love and serve comes from one's union with Christ. Jesus' confidence to love and serve his disciples emanated from his relationship with The Father. The story of Jesus washing the disciple's feet reveal his love, humility, confidence, courage, selflessness, and commitment to carry God's mission for his life to the point of death on a cross.

Jesus knew that the time had come for him to suffer, die on the cross, be resurrected, and ascend into heaven. Before he left earth, Jesus intended to show his disciples the full extent of his love for them. Jesus knew that God had granted him all authority, that he had come from God, and that he was going to return to him. Jesus' confidence to humbly and selflessly serve his disciples was rooted in his relationship with the Father. Jesus knew from where he came, where he was going, and what authority had been granted him by the Father. This faith in God the Father provided Jesus the confidence to love and serve others at his own expense.

Jesus showed his disciples the extent and depth of his love for them by washing their feet. This was a thankless task performed in Jesus' day by slaves and/or house hold servants. Jesus would not have expected to wash his disciple's feet. The disciples would not have been expected to wash each other's feet. The disciples had dirty feet consequently, they had a real need. Jesus took the initiative to serve them in a manner totally unexpected from the one people called Master and Lord. Jesus encouraged his

disciples to follow his example and to serve each other. If they would do so, Jesus promised they would be blessed.

Peter initially refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Peter did not understand his own need to be served by his Lord and Master. Peter did not fully understand the concept of leaders who serve those who follow them. Jesus initiated this act of service as an example for his disciples. He wanted them to understand what it meant for a leader to initiate an act of service to humbly meet a real need of someone else.

Application

As a follower of Christ who leads in the marketplace, one might ask: What does serving the real needs of others look like where I lead? Please keep in mind one must view leadership as a servant within the context of a mission. Jesus had essentially two missions when he came to earth the first time. One was to die on the cross and pay the penalty of sin, thereby, making it possible for us to become reconciled to God and have union with Christ. Jesus completed this mission. The other mission was to prepare the apostles to lead the effort of making disciples. Jesus served the apostles within the context of preparing them to lead. Serving others does not mean a requirement to meet every want and need followers think they have. One leads as a servant by initiating actions that enable and empower others to participate in a mission to the maximum of their ability.

One should not view serving others as simply doing random acts of service which no one else wants to do. Serving followers does not mean one performs subservient tasks that are not expected of a leader. Leading as a servant does not mean one humbly takes out the trash, sweeps the floors, and makes the coffee.

Serving others means meeting their real needs. As was the case with Peter and his need to have Jesus wash his feet, often followers will not recognize their own real needs. Jesus understood the implications of his mission to his disciples. Consequently, he understood their needs in the context of God's plan better than they did. As a leader, one may be in the position of understanding the mission and how it impacts his or her followers better than they do. To serve those one leads, a leader must develop a clear understanding of his or her followers' needs in the context of whatever mission the organization is pursuing together.

Developing an understanding of followers' needs requires getting to know others on a personal level. One must form an understanding the follower's strengths and weaknesses. Part of meeting a follower's needs involves bringing his or her strengths to bear on an organization's mission effort. In areas where a follower is weak, a leader must either develop a plan of action to help his or her followers transform a weakness into strength or accept his or her limitations and compensate the short-coming with another's strength.

Another aspect of serving your followers involves getting to know their heart. Emotions such as fear, anger, insecurity, stress, anxiety, and many others can dramatically reduce a follower's contribution to the mission. A leader must know what motivates and inspires each of his or her followers; what levels of risk and responsibility one can handle. Serving real needs requires a leader to know a follower personally.

Conclusion

Jesus led others as a servant and expects his followers to do likewise. Paul encouraged believers to imitate Christ's attitude as a servant. A Christian's union with

Christ and faith in the sovereignty of God form the foundation for serving others. An unwavering commitment to the service of Jesus' mission to make disciples provides the motivation to serve others.

A leader that serves others must be humble. A leader who believes he or she is better than his or her followers will rule them and not serve them. There is no place for vain conceit in Jesus' approach to leadership as a servant.

Serving others means a leader must set aside selfish ambition. Personal agendas get in the way of serving others. The mission a leader and one's followers pursue together must become everyone's top priority. Followers who perceive a leader using them to accomplish only what is best for the leader will not follow voluntarily.

To serve others a leader must love his or her followers as Christ loved his disciples. A leader must get to know his or her followers intimately. A leader must understand the real needs of a follower, sometimes better than they do. This often requires a leader to get involved with the dysfunctional part of a person's life. The leader has to initiate the acts of service that meet the needs of his or her followers.

Leading as a servant often requires a leader to love followers who are hard to love. Jesus socialized with tax collectors and sinners. Every leader has hard to love followers. The leader, who strives to serve others, learns to love the weak follower as well as the star performer. Leaders must also look out for the needs of the most vulnerable members of the organization he or she leads. Leaders should never take advantage of the "widows and orphans" one leads. One way a leader can serve these people correlates to being sure no one else takes advantage of them either.

Serving others proves mightier than exercising authority over them. Serving those you lead within the context of a mission empowers and enables your followers in great ways. ENTRUSTED Leader core value three is: An APPROACH to leadership characterized by denial of self and serving others. Serving others as a leader starts by humbly setting aside one's own personal agendas followed by initiating acts of service that meet the real needs of those who follow. Get to know the real needs of those you lead and initiate the appropriate acts of service to meet them.