

*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 Nine: Two Approaches to Leadership**

By  
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## Lesson Nine: Two Approaches to Leadership

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

**BIBLE VERSE(S):** Mark 10:42-45

**ONE SIMPLE TRUTH:** Jesus Christ "approached" leadership as a servant and rejected the world's authoritative approach.

**APPLICATION:** Approach leadership by serving those you lead.

Many styles of management exist, but there are only two APPROACHES to leadership. Jesus Christ approached leadership as a servant. He rejected the world's authoritative approach. Jesus instructed his followers to lead by serving others as opposed to exercising authority over them.

A "style" describes various techniques used by managers to direct others. A style helps a manager organize and administer a group's behavior to complete a particular task. A manager can legitimately alternate between various styles of management, depending on the task at hand and the experience level of those he or she oversees. Styles focus on managing people and their work activities. Hendricks and Deison point to the following styles and the situation each fits best with:

1. Directing style – best for inexperienced followers
2. Coaching style – best for discouraged or disillusioned followers
3. Supporting style – best for experienced followers
4. Delegating style – best for peak performers, high impact followers <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dynamics of Leadership class notes, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1999

The best business schools teach these techniques, and others like them. Countless authors have written books describing various styles for managing people. In my opinion, however, management and leadership concern different disciplines. Each has its proper application. If managing people focuses on organizing and administering their activity in regard to a task, then leading people focuses on motivating, empowering, and guiding their activity in regard to pursuing a vision and mission.

An “approach” conveys an attitude of a leader’s heart in regard to leading others. An approach describes how one views a leader in relation to those who follow. Only two approaches exist. A leader either views one’s role as a servant or as an authority figure. A leader either sees him or herself as a superior, controlling others who must serve his or her self-centered agenda or as a servant serving others and the collective good of an organization. A leader either serves those he or she leads, or a leader views followers as pawns at one’s disposal. A leader who serves recognizes that real followers chose to follow voluntarily out of trust and respect. An authoritative leader forces others to follow by coercion or by exercising power and authority. The difference in these two approaches is night and day.

The approach of leading by serving is diametrically opposed to leading by exercising authority. Unlike styles of management, it would not be appropriate for a leader to change back and forth between approaches of leadership. Typically a leader’s heart is oriented towards one approach or another. Jesus unreservedly rejected and denounced the world’s approach to leading as an authority figure. Jesus led as a servant and instructed his follows to do likewise. As modern day followers of Jesus Christ,

believers have no choice but to adopt Jesus' approach of leadership, which entails serving those we lead. Read Mark 10:35-45 and answer the following questions.

**Observations of the Biblical Text<sup>2</sup> (Mark 10:35-37)**

Which two disciples came to Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

What did they request of Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain in your own words what you think these two disciples were hoping Jesus would give to them?

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**Observations of the Biblical Text (Mark 10:38-40)**

What was Jesus' immediate reaction to the request? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What question did Jesus ask these two disciples? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did James and John answer Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you think Jesus meant when he told them: "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with," ...? (NIV)

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<sup>2</sup> 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)

What two things did Jesus tell James and John about the seats at his left and right hand?

1.

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2.

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**Observations of the Biblical Text (Mark 10:41)**

How did the other ten disciples respond to James and John's request?

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Why do you think the other ten reacted as they did?

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**Observations of the Biblical Text (Mark 10:42-42)**

Whom did Jesus call together?

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What did Jesus say the rulers of the Gentiles do to those they lead?

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What did Jesus say the high officials of the Gentiles do to those they lead?

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Based on this passage, describe in your own words how Jesus characterized the world's approach to leadership.

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**Observations of the Biblical Text (Mark 10:43a)**

In the first part of Mark 10:43, Jesus said to his disciples: "Not so with you. Instead ..." (NIV). What do you think Jesus meant when he said: "Not so with you." (NIV)?

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Did Jesus leave any opportunity for his disciples to use the world's approach to leading as an authoritative figure? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think the word "Instead" is about to introduce?

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**Observations of the Biblical Text (Mark 10:43b-44)**

According to Jesus, what must a leader do to become great?

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To be first, what must someone do?

\_\_\_\_\_

Based on these passages, how would you characterize Jesus' approach to leadership?

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\_\_\_\_\_

In what ways can a leader serve those he or she leads?

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Observations of the Biblical Text (Mark 10:45)**

What did Jesus (the Son of Man) NOT come to earth expecting?

Name two things Jesus came to earth to accomplish:

1.

\_\_\_\_\_

2.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Commentary**

Jesus called his disciples together and gave them a lesson in leadership. This lesson is recorded in Mark 10:35-45. In my opinion, this is the single most important

passage in the New Testament on the topic of leadership. This passage has two main sections bridged together by a significant transitional phrase. Two significant events preceded and prompted Jesus' teaching on leadership.

In Mark 9:33-34, believers learn that an argument had erupted among the twelve apostles. Jesus confronted them on the nature of their argument. He asked them point blank about what they had been arguing. All twelve apostles remained silent. No one gave the Lord an answer. As one can see, the apostles had argued over who among them was the greatest. The apostles debated who was the most important, the most powerful, and the most influential. Jesus gave them a preview of the lesson to come when he responded to their silence by saying: "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." (Mark 9:35 NIV)

A second and more immediate incident prompted a firmer response from the Lord. In Mark 10:32, Christ followers learn that Jesus was leading his disciples on a journey to Jerusalem. The Apostles had come to realize that Jesus was the promised Messiah. The crowd was ready to sit him on the throne of David as King. All of Israel was looking for a warrior savior that would throw off the shackles of Roman dominance. Israel longed for the restoration of glory and power of God's Kingdom on earth. Jesus' followers had seen his miraculous powers and popularity with the masses. Surely, the time had come for Jesus to march into the City of David, the capital of Israel, Jerusalem, and seize the reins of power predicted by the prophets of old.

Zebedee had two sons named James and John. Jesus called these brothers, whom he named "Boanerges", to be two of his twelve apostles. This nickname meant "sons of thunder" and perhaps provides a student of God's Word some insight into their

personalities. Hungry to exercise the power of their association with Jesus, they once asked the Lord: “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” just because the people of a Samaritan village refused Jesus a proper welcome (Luke 9:54 NIV).

James and John desired power. Perhaps these two brothers ignited the discussion of who among the apostles rated to be called the greatest. After all, James and John were among the earliest followers of Jesus, which meant they had “seniority.” They comprised two-thirds of Jesus’ inner circle along with Peter. Given Peter’s apparent fall from favor for rebuking Jesus, (see Mark 8:33 – when the Lord refers to you as “Satan” you might be out of favor.) James and John perhaps had come to believe that they were the greatest among the apostles.

James and John’s inflated view of their importance led to the second incident that prompted Jesus’ lesson on leadership. In Mark 10:37, Christ followers find these “sons of thunder” making the following request of the Lord Jesus: “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” (NIV) Jesus had just finished warning the apostles that his arrival in Jerusalem would be met with betrayal, suffering, and death, followed by his resurrection. This description of Jesus’ impending reception did not fit with James and John’s view of a warrior savior, ready to claim the power of his earthly throne. These brothers hung dearly to their belief that Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem would include being crowned king. James and John fully intended to grab two positions of power before the coronation.

Once this power play by the sons of Zebedee became known, the other ten apostles reacted very negatively. Mark tells us that the remaining apostles became

indignant. The other ten apostles became very upset by James and John's request for positions of power. Jesus recognized that he had to put a stop to this infighting among his disciples. Jesus knew that between the apostle's argument about who was the greatest and James and John's request for power these twelve had a faulty concept of leadership. The time had come for Jesus to make the essence of his approach to leadership crystal clear to the twelve apostles, and to his followers for all time.

Jesus began his lesson on leadership by describing the world's approach to leadership. Jesus said in Mark 10:42: "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them." (NIV) The world's approach to leadership is characterized by the following: authority, power, controlling people, giving commands, force, manipulation, coercion, and enticement. In a nutshell, the world's approach to leadership is based on "authority." The ultimate goal of this approach is to control people according to the leader's selfish desires.

Two key phrases spoken by Jesus best describe the world's authoritative approach. He first said that Gentile leaders: "lord it over them". The root Greek word is *katakuriuo*. Strong defines this term as follows: "1 to bring under one's power, to subject one's self, to subdue, master. 2 to hold in subjection, to be master of, exercise lordship over."<sup>3</sup> This word conveys the idea of overpowering someone to subdue and control them. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says this of *katakuriuo*: "... the word means the exercise of, dominion against someone, i.e., to one's own

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<sup>3</sup>James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G2634.

advantage.”<sup>4</sup> From this a person can draw the picture of a leader who uses his position, power, and authority to control others for his or her selfish agenda and gains.

Jesus reinforces this image when he says: “and their high officials exercise authority over them.” (NIV) The root Greek term for “exercise authority” is *katexousiazō*. Strong defines the term as follows: “1 to exercise authority, wield power.”<sup>5</sup> The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament adds this to our understanding of *katexousiazō*: “it is likely that the word implies the tendency towards compulsion or oppression which is immanent in all earthly power, and not merely in political.”<sup>6</sup> The world’s approach contemplates a leader wielding power to force followers to submit and obey commands by compulsion.

A leader using this approach relies on one’s possession of authority to force followers to obey orders and follow commands. Followers become nothing more than expendable parts to be used to accomplish the leader’s self-centered agenda and goals. Leaders who use this approach exercise their authority to control followers for their own purpose and self-interest. The interest and needs of a follower are of no importance or concern to an authoritative leader.

An authoritative approach to leading exhibits a selfish approach. A leader, whose heart is oriented on self, will typically resort to using authority because this approach puts

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<sup>4</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 Edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 Compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976), 3:1098.

<sup>5</sup>James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G2715.

<sup>6</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 Edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 Compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976), 2:575.

his or her interest first. An authoritative leader uses people for personal gain with no regard for the well-being of a follower.

Please keep in mind that there is nothing wrong with a leader possessing legitimate authority. Remember our lesson on Romans 13:1 where readers learned that God himself has established all authority. No authority exists apart from God. He raises people up to lead according to his will. There is nothing wrong with a leader exercising his God-given authority in a certain situation. In fact, not to do so would be a dereliction of duty and responsibility. The line is crossed when the leader uses his or her authority for selfish purposes, instead of God's will and the benefit of one's entire organization.

**“Not so with you. Instead ...”** (NIV)

With these words, Jesus declared that he rejected the world's authoritative approach to leadership. Jesus also instructed his followers to reject this approach to leading others. Compelling others to follow by the use of force, power, enticement, or manipulation [or anything of the sort] was not an option for a follower of Christ. Authoritative leadership was not an option then and still is not an option today. The authoritative approach to leading may work in the world's system, but it has no place in God's administration. An ENTRUSTED Leader must resist the seduction of leading as those who embrace the world's approach.

Jesus quickly offered his followers an alternative approach. "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." (NIV Mark 10:43b-44) James and John mistakenly thought greatness came from possessing a position of power and influence. These brothers assumed that sitting at Jesus' right and left hand would make them second to none, except The Lord Jesus. Jesus

completely turned the tables when he described his approach to leadership. To be the kind of leader God desires to use, one must reorient his or her view of leading from self to God and others.

Jesus approached leadership as a servant. James and John desired greatness among his followers. These brothers mistakenly believed that sitting next to Jesus in his glory would make them great. Jesus clearly stated that greatness comes from serving others, not exercising authority over them. Empowering others characterizes Jesus' approach to leadership. By serving others, a leader can enable followers to contribute to the overall welfare of the organization and themselves. A leader using this approach truly views oneself as a member of a group, not the most important person in a group.

Jesus' servant approach to leading is not a reactive or passive one. Leaders who serve do not wait passively for events to unfold to see how one should react. Leading as a servant does not mean the leader foregoes taking initiatives or risks. God has established every leader's authority to lead others and not to do so constitute an abdication of one's responsibility. Jesus did not teach his followers to be passive, reactionary leaders.

Jesus used two key terms to articulate his approach to leadership. He said one must become a servant and a slave. The root Greek term for servant is *diakonos*. Strong defines it as follows: “**1** one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master, a servant, attendant, minister. 1A the servant of a king.”<sup>7</sup> Paul uses this same term to describe leaders within the church that we call deacons. A “*diakonos*” leader is one who follows the commands of Jesus and places one's selfish interest secondary to the good of

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<sup>7</sup>James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G1249.

the organization as a whole. Note the contrast between worldly leaders who give commands that serve their own interests first and godly leaders who execute the commands of another that serve the interests of the organization as a whole. Sadly, in our culture today, people do not expect leaders to serve, nor do people expect servants to lead.

Jesus took his description of a leader a step farther when he said his followers were to be slaves. The root Greek word is *doulos*. Strong defines this term as follows: “**1** a slave, bondman, man of servile condition. 1A a slave. 1B metaph., one who gives himself up to another’s will those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among men. 1C devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests. **2** a servant, attendant.”<sup>8</sup> To lead like Jesus requires one to willingly disregard his or her interests for the sake of others. This takes a strong faith in God. One must have the conviction that God will watch out for the leader’s interests as the leader oversees the interests of others. Putting others ahead of themselves requires humility. Jesus approached leadership as a servant and so should his followers.

### **Application**

You may be asking yourself: How can a person be a servant/slave and a leader at the same time? What connection exists between serving and leading? In his book Jesus on Leadership, Wilkes addresses this connection. “Mission (and the vision of that mission) was the connection between service and leadership.”<sup>9</sup> The key to understanding

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<sup>8</sup>James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G1401.

<sup>9</sup> Wilkes, C. Gene, *Jesus on Leadership*, Tyndale House Publishing, Wheaton, IL., 1998, p 17

the relationship between serving and leading lies within an organization's vision and mission. Wilkes goes on to add: "A servant leader – serves the mission and leads by serving those on the mission with him."<sup>10</sup> Authoritative leaders force others to serve the leader's self-centered agenda. Jesus' approach calls for leaders to serve others as all members of an organization pursue their mission and vision together. Whatever organization one leads in it is his or her responsibility as a follower of Christ to enable and empower those you lead. Empowerment comes by the leader serving his or her followers, who in turn are enabled to contribute to the maximum of their ability to help accomplish the organization's mission. This may require putting one's self interests behind the mission of the organization and those he or she leads.

Jesus' approach to leadership can have a positive impact on any organization. Most followers work more effectively when lead by a servant rather than a dictator. People prefer a leader who is putting the mission of the organization ahead of their own self-interests. Leaders empower workers to maximize their effort when the leader serves his or her followers instead of bossing them around. This may surprise some; but, Jesus' approach to leadership is not primarily intended to make you a better worldly leader. Jesus' approach may not result in worldly success. Jesus not only rejected the world's authoritative approach to leadership; but also he rejected worldly missions, such as the pursuit of fame, fortune, and power. Jesus never promised that leading as a servant would result in worldly gains. Jesus' approach to leadership is intended for the pursuit of his mission on earth.

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<sup>10</sup> Wilkes, C. Gene, *Jesus on Leadership*, Tyndale House Publishing, Wheaton, IL., 1998, p 17

Jesus came to earth to serve others, not be served. Jesus obediently laid his interest aside and gave his life according to the will of the Father. “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 10:45 NIV) Jesus completed his mission when he died on the cross. Jesus’ crucifixion was an act of humility, sacrifice, and service to others. Jesus is not asking his followers to do anything he did not do.

As followers of Jesus Christ, our mission is to make disciples. Applying Jesus’ approach requires a prior commitment to serve Jesus’ mission of making disciples. Think back to our prior lessons on ENTRUSTED Leader core values one and two: **A HEART willing to do all God asks** and **A MISSION for leading characterized by a faithful commitment to multiplying followers of Jesus Christ that supersedes all other marketplace endeavors**. Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples. We must decide if we are willing to do so. If we are, then the approach we must take to leading people involves the role of a servant.

### **Conclusion:**

Jesus rejected the world’s authoritative approach to leadership. He instructed his followers to do likewise. Leading with authority is about telling people what to do and expecting them to obey. Authoritative leadership puts a leader’s self-interest ahead of those of his or her followers and the organization as a whole. This approach uses power and authority that forces people to comply and obey even if against their will.

Jesus approached leadership as a servant. This approach requires humility and sacrifice. Serving those one leads means putting their needs and the mission of the organization ahead of those of the leader. This approach empowers and enables people to

contribute to the mission of the organization. A leader using this approach believes that those they lead will follow voluntarily because they recognize that the organization's mission is worth pursuing.