

Session 14

Servant Leadership

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

The values of our culture and world emphasize greatness, fame, and stature. Believers are tempted to import these values into the varied groups which they lead. However, these values are opposed to the leadership values that Jesus taught. Leadership is done in many areas: the church, family, workplace, and neighborhood. Jesus taught us that the best leaders are servants to those whom they lead.

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — John 3:22-30

After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. (This was before John was put in prison.) An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less." (NIV)

Large Group Discussion

1. Read through the above Scripture again and highlight any word or phrases that stand out.

2. What can we learn from John the Baptist about servant leadership?

3. John told his disciples that “[Jesus] must become greater: I (John the Baptist) must become less.” How does this model of leadership differ from the secular understanding of leadership?

4. When leading, is your tendency to lead from the front or from the back?

Small Group break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

We are all leaders, in some respect, due to the influence we have on others. Parents influence their children.

Teachers influence their students. We influence and lead our co-workers, family and friends through our words and actions.

Have each person share about their leadership roles and style. Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Reminder

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.

2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next week: “Life Planning.”

Close in prayer.

Helpful Resources

The Servant As Leader by Robert Greenleaf

Servant Leader by Ken Blanchard

Devotions: Week Twenty & Twenty-one

Weekday 1

Scripture reading — John 13:12-17

After [Jesus] had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does this text tie together the two words servant and leadership?
4. In verse 15 Jesus notes that he is giving an example to his followers. How can you apply the foot-washing task in everyday life?

5. How has Jesus recently served you?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Mark 10:42-45

So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Jesus tells the disciples that they are not to act like Gentiles, treating people badly. Recall a time when you were treated badly. How did you react and what did you learn?
4. Jesus is the ultimate example of servanthood and leadership. How does the extent of his service teach you about both?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — Mark 9:35-37

[Jesus] sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What is Jesus teaching you by using a child?

4. Jesus uses the phrase “servant of all.” Who are you being called to serve?

5. How do leadership and service go together in Jesus’ life? In your life?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God’s word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — 1 Peter 5:1-4

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you ²to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. ³Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Peter holds the sufferings of Christ in contrast to the glory to be revealed. How do you, as a servant leader, interpret this in your life?
4. Note that Peter compares leadership to shepherding a flock. Then he makes reference to the “chief shepherd” (verse 4). What does this teach you about God’s expectations of servant leadership?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Luke 22:24-27

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵But [Jesus] said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In our world and in all ages, the servant is considered the lesser person. How is Jesus’ kingdom different?

4. Who are you leading? How are you serving, helping, assisting, and training them?

5. What does doing your best Jesus imitation look like in your vocation?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday (before worship...preparing)

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Look back over the week, consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday (after worship...pondering)

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 6

Scripture reading — Philippians 2:1-11

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does verse 5 inform your thinking about servant leadership?
4. How does this passage say your mindset needs to change when you are being tested?
5. When Jesus emptied himself, what was he filled with? What does this tell you about leadership and service?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7

Scripture reading — Romans 12:3-21

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What does it mean to serve out of your giftedness?
4. Regarding people who you work or live with, what are some specific ways you can encourage them to use their gifts?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture reading — Acts 20:34-35

You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions.
³⁵In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. How did Paul demonstrate servant leadership here?

3. Paul considered himself to be an example to rising leaders among the believers. How does this apply to you?

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — Colossians 3:23-24

²³Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Consider your various relationships at work, home, church and neighborhood. How would you serve each? Keeping in mind boundary issues, how would you serve as though the other people were Christ?

4. In your work in any area, what does it mean to “work heartily”?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

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How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10

Scripture reading — Matthew 25:34-40

[Jesus taught,] ³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does Jesus expand your vision of who you are called to serve?
4. If you are practicing servant leadership, how can you lead the people you are serving?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. How is it going?

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you?

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