

# EMBASSY

COLLEGE



**TEXTBOOK (ACADEMIC VERSION)**

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

**COURSE: HOW TO BE A SERVANT LEADER (LT440)**

**Dr. Ron Cottle**



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# SERVANT LEADERSHIP

*“Lead by Serving – Serve by Leading”*

Dr. Ron Cottle

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# PREFACE

Servant leadership is defined by Jesus himself. In Matthew 20:26b-28, he said: *“Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant.... For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many”* (NLT).

The setting in which Jesus spoke this defining word makes it all the more important. It is Passover, the 14th of Nisan, after sundown (6:00 p.m.), when Jesus and his disciples had gathered to eat the Passover supper (*Pascha* or *deipnon*). The Passover lamb had been killed at noon that day. At some point before the meal, the mother of James and John had come to him and requested that her two sons be allowed to “sit on his right hand and on his left hand in His kingdom.”

This request was perceived as arrogant and misplaced by the other ten and led to arguments as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom. The carnality and indignant attitudes of the apostles were on display right there at the Passover table. Mark 10:35-45 says that it was James and John, who made the request. So, it was evidently a planned family affair. Jesus' intervention in the argument brought this important defining statement written in both Matthew 20:26b-28 and Mark 10:44-45.

But it did not stop there as John records in chapter 13. When the supper was over, a supper they ate with unwashed feet due to the carnal attitudes of the disciples, Jesus arose from his couch, laid aside his outer garment, and took a towel and wrapped it around his waist like a common household servant. He then poured water into a basin and washed the disciples' feet himself (vv. 4-11).

He followed this act with a question in verse 12: “*Do you understand what I just did for you?*” Then without waiting for an answer He said: “*I have given you an example to follow; do as I have done to you.*”

A common misconception among would-be leaders is that leadership is a superior place of honor where one is served and exercises power over others. But Jesus modeled true servant leadership when the One to whom, “*the Father had given all things into His hands*” (John 13:3) took those same hands and served His team members as a bonds slave. What could define it better than this? Omnipotent hands washing feet!

Paul understood this clearly when he said that the primary responsibility of servant leaders in the church is “*To equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:12 NLT). The servant leaders are named in the preceding verse as five-fold ministers: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.



The bottom line is that true Christian servant leaders don't emulate the example of the world but that of Jesus. He came to give His life not only to God but for others. Therefore, our mission is to serve God as servant leaders of others.

This book is gratefully dedicated to that purpose.

**Ron Cottle, Summer, 2012**

# INTRODUCTION

After reading this book you will be able to identify and develop attitudes and strategies that will produce the traits of a servant leader. You will also be able to identify and understand strategic people skills and how to employ them. I will teach you to recognize the difference between leadership and management, and help you develop the skills required to be a good manager of people. You will learn to recognize the signs of ministry or workplace discouragement, its causes, and its cures.

Just as importantly, you will come to understand the nature and value of healthy, not unhealthy, self-confidence. Healthy self-confidence is as important to a servant leader as the air he or she breathes. A servant leader must have it in order to motivate others.

This book will present and discuss the motivational strategies needed to become an effective servant leader. The goal of this material is to help you appreciate and practice practical ways to enrich and develop the servant leadership characteristics you already possess so you can impart to others an increased passion to be an effective servant leader.

# GENUINE SERVANT LEADERSHIP

“Let us then follow Christ’s paths which he has revealed to us, above all the path of humility, which he himself became for us. He showed us that path by his precepts, and he himself followed it by his suffering on our behalf. In order to die for us – because as God he could not die – the word became flesh and dwelt among us. The immortal one took on mortality that he might die for us, and by dying put to death our death. This is what the Lord did, this is the gift he granted to us. The mighty one was brought low, the lowly one was slain, and after he was slain, he rose again and was exalted. For he did not intend to leave us dead in hell, but to exalt in himself at the resurrection of the dead those whom he had already exalted and made just by the faith and praise they gave him. Yes, he gave us the path of humility. If we keep to it we shall confess our belief in the Lord and have good reason to sing: We shall praise you, God, we shall praise you and call upon your name.”

-**St. Augustine of Hippo** (Sermon 23A, 1-4: CCL 41, 41, 321-323)

“Servant leadership is more than a concept; it is a fact. Any great leader, by which I also mean an ethical leader of any group, will see herself or himself as a servant of that group and will act accordingly.”

-**M. Scott Peck, M.D.** (*The Road Less Traveled*)

# CHAPTER ONE

## HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE SERVANT LEADER

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

*Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. - (Philippians 2:5-11)*

I believe Philippians 2:5-11 is a great way to introduce the principles we need to learn about being an effective servant leader. It is, of course, talking about the ultimate model of servant leadership, Jesus. He demonstrated that by serving others we have the basis

for becoming an effective servant leader whether in the ministry or in the marketplace.

Jesus models how to be a servant leader in Philippians 2. As N.T. Wright remarks in *After*

*You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*:

“Insofar as Jesus’ life constitutes a ‘moral example,’ it is that he has modeled an entirely new aspect of ‘morality’ — namely, humility, a willingness to suffer without recrimination, and a determination to forgive even those who were not asking for it. But these are not ‘examples of how to do it.’ They are indications that a new way of being human has been launched upon the world. And it is the habits of heart that generate and sustain this new way of being human that the specifically Christian ‘virtue’ is designed to produce.”<sup>1</sup>

In many organizations today there is a lot of frustration and discontentment. In some there is even a general malaise bordering on serious morale deficiency. Virtue has gone AWOL. Unfortunately, this is true whether it is a ministry or a business organization. What is the problem? What is missing that has caused this to become the norm rather than the exception?

Business, corporate, and church leaders for the most part have missed connecting the dots in an essential area. What they have missed is the sense of deep spiritual

connection with their work. These leaders, managers, and workers lack a spiritual connection with their work and their workplace that transcends position, power, and pay. There has got to be something more, a value-added dimension in the workplace, beyond just the position we have, the title we are given, the payment we receive, and the power over others we exert in the workplace. Understanding what is missing will mean the difference in whether or not you and I become effective servant leaders. Remembering that we are image-bearers of Christ in all that we do, our leadership style and methods can bring spirituality into our work, relationships, and witness in the world.

What is missing in many corporations and ministries is the sense of a deep, spiritual connection with our work.

The kind of connection I am focusing on here was experienced by many in our country's earlier generations. Today, however, we seem to have largely lost it. This spiritual connection is anchored in the belief that my work or my ministry must be an expression of my spiritual relationship with God. I don't compartmentalize my work and spirituality. Instead, I serve God in and through my work, worship, and witness in all my relationships. You may say that it is easy for a preacher to say this because a preacher's work is serving God and God's people. That is true, but I must add that this

ought to be just as true of every person in whatever workplace we find ourselves. If it isn't, then we are not giving that workplace our best. Remember St. Paul's admonition, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23-24).

Every servant leader must understand that our work isn't something we do alongside our spirituality. It is an essential expression of our spirituality. Our work and our worship are not two different contrasting things that compete with one another. How do I know if someone lacks this revelation? If they say something like, "If only I could do less work, I could do more worship." That is what I call "bad thinking" because one is the tangible extension and concrete expression of the other.

Our work should be the outflow on the horizontal level of our worship on the vertical level. Let me put it another way. Our worship is the ocean where we meet with God; our work is the river where it flows out to others. If we can get that ingrained on the inside of us we won't ever experience burn out. We will enjoy our work, which is very important, and we will bring dignity and excellence to that work that can't be brought any other way. I read a little poem once about Jesus that was written by Tennyson that said everything He touched, even the washing of the disciples' feet, He brought dignity

and meaning and majesty to. It doesn't matter what our work is we can bring dignity and majesty into it by remembering everything we do is a reflection of our spiritual relationship with God.

I wish I could take every college freshman, look him straight in the eye and say, "Are you preparing your life in a field that can become the expression of who you really are and of your relationship with your God? If not, you are probably in the wrong field."

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I have taught college and graduate students for most of my life and have observed that the brightest students generally take longer in settling on whom they are and what they want to be in life. They often have many options to choose from, so I always try to warn these students to consider all the options and don't choose an option just because of the money or the fame it might bring. Choosing a vocation is one of the most important decisions that a person can make. That "calling" is a visible expression of Christ living in and through them.



This choice becomes even more important when we realize how much influence our spiritual life is to have on all of our relationships. We cannot be one person at work, another at home, and then another at worship. All these areas of our lives need to be in sync. If they are not, each will begin to compete for prominence and may even try to tear us away from the other relationships. If they are in sync, then we can have an internal integrity and be one person flowing at work and at home and at worship.

So how do we attain this balance in our lives? There is no gimmick or technique. It is not even a process. It is a conscious choice. We need to determine to live a life that is always an expression of who we really are whether at work, at home, or at church.

## LEADERSHIP CRITERION #1: BE YOU!

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What does it mean to be you? It means to be the same person in every circumstance. Integrity means you are the same on the outside as you are on the inside and vice versa. What you are on the inside with your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes is what we see on the outside through your words and actions. You hold to the same essential values in whatever role you fill. The key word here is consistency. A servant leader does not blow hot and cold. He is not a tiger today and a lamb tomorrow. She is not a lily today