

*Ten Characteristics
of Servant Leadership*

*Inspiration from
Biblical Leaders*

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Abstract

Servant leadership, as Robert Greenleaf put it, is about being a servant first. This study examines servant leadership from a Christian perspective. Many leaders in the Bible were first and foremost servants. Jesus taught that "the leader should be like a servant" (Luke 22:26). Peter wrote: "Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example" (1 Peter 5:3). The ten values of a servant leader are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. I examine the examples that both Old and New Testament leaders provide with respect to these ten values. I further describe how these great leaders are inspiring me to become a better servant leader. Each chapter finishes with questions and thoughts for further reflection, with the hope that this work might be useful for Bible studies or discussion groups of Christian leaders.



Introduction

Servant leadership is a growing concept in management and leadership that may, at first, appear rather paradoxical. Servant leadership does not dispute that the leader's role is to be a visionary who guides and directs the work of others according to the organization's overall goals. However, it charges him with enabling and empowering the work force, rather than enforcing his rights of superiority. While the leader may manage the business of her organization, she does not manage, but rather lead and serve, the people she supervises. Reversing the trends that started perhaps with the industrial revolution, servant leadership puts the human dimension back into the work place.

While the transformation of an organization to servant leadership is a long and gradual process, the dividends of this investment are unquestionable, and many companies have witnessed the improved work environment and enhanced productivity that will result. Jim Collins describes in his powerful book "Good to Great" [1] the results of an ambitious research project, in which he meticulously analyzed the most successful companies on the stock market and the characteristics of their leaders. Each of the 11 most successful companies, which financially outperformed their competitors even in the most challenging circumstances, was led by a CEO with the following two characteristics: competency and humility. While their being competent was no surprise, being humble certainly seems counter to the stereotypical image of the successful business manager.

Robert Greenleaf has summarized the basic philosophy of servant leadership in the following quote [2]:

The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?

In my personal life journey, I have certainly been in the role of a servant, although perhaps primarily outside of the traditional business environment. After finishing my Ph.D., I spent a year working full-time as a volunteer for

a mission in Baja California, Mexico. Two trips to Colombia, South America, and participating in the Sunday School and choir ministries of my church have also strengthened my sense of wanting to be of service to others.

However, how do these experiences of servanthood translate into my work environment? I am perhaps only an emerging leader in my work place. I work for a biological database called the Protein Data Bank (PDB), where I am responsible for the production aspects of making the data available to the end users. In this capacity, I have project (but as of yet no personnel) management responsibilities for a group of fewer than a half dozen programmers. Hence, I feel fortunate that the certification program of the San Diego Leadership Initiative could expose me to the concepts of servant leadership at a relatively early stage of more formal leadership roles in my professional career.

Let me begin then the exploration of what can be learnt from Biblical leaders about the ten characteristics of servant leadership, and how the application of their examples might help to make me a better servant leader. This is what Jesus said (Matthew 20:25-28) about the leader being a servant first:

²⁵But Jesus called them together and said, "You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord it over the people beneath them. ²⁶But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must become your slave. ²⁸For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many."

The same passage is repeated almost verbatim in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 10:42-45), and, somewhat differently worded, in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 22:25-27):

²⁵Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men order their people around, and yet they are called 'friends of the people.' ²⁶But among you, those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant."

²⁷Normally the master sits at the table and is served by his servants. But not here! For I am your servant.

The transformation to servant leadership has to start with oneself, with the leader as a servant being a good example to others around him. Peter expressed this very clearly in 1Peter 5:3, where he wrote:

Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example.

Bill Bottum, in his essay "Within Our Reach, Servant-Leadership for the Twenty-first Century," co-written with Dorothy Lenz, in the collection of essays "Insights on Leadership" [3] talks about how Robert Greenleaf was inspired by Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet. The entire story is found in John 13:4-17, but the essence is contained in the following two verses:

¹⁴And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

For many illustrations throughout this study, I will draw on the examples of New Testament leaders in general and Jesus in particular. However, this does not mean that there is no servant leadership to be found in the Old Testament. A text search for "servant" shows that many of the great Old Testament leaders were referred to as servant, usually as "servant of the LORD" (i.e. God's servant). The illustrious list includes none less than the great founding fathers Abraham (Genesis 26:24) and Moses (Exodus 14:31), such strong men as Joshua (Joshua 24:29) and Samson (Judges 15:18), and some of the greatest prophets and kings, such as Samuel (1Samuel 3:9), David (Psalms 18:1), Elijah (2Kings 10:10), Hezekiah (2Chronicles 32:16), Job (Job 1:8), Isaiah (Isaiah 20:3), Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 43:10), Jacob (Ezekiel 28:25), Daniel (Daniel 9:17), and Zerubbabel (Haggai 2:23).

In the following ten chapters, I shall look at each of the ten characteristics of servant leadership as defined by Larry Spears [3], i.e. listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. How did the great Biblical leaders exemplify these characteristics? How can their

examples inspire me to be a better servant leader? Finally, I conclude each chapter with questions for thought and discussion. You may want to use those questions just for your own personal reflection, or you may find them useful for group study with other Christian leaders. As you enter your own journey of servant leadership, perhaps you would want to start the practice of journaling, that is the habit of keeping a notebook or diary in which you write down your thoughts. Servant leadership will be a lifelong endeavor, and your personal notes along the path may prove to be a wonderful companion to tell how far you have come and to encourage you to go even further ahead.

For Thought and Discussion

1. What emotions does the term "servant" invoke for you? Does it have negative connotations? How about "service"?
2. Does your organization have a culture that encourages leaders to serve those who work for them? If not, what could you do to start such a culture through your own example?
3. Read the story of Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet (John 13:4-17). In your own life, have you ever been served by one of your leaders in an unexpected way? What was your reaction? Were you reluctant like Peter? Did it inspire you to do likewise?



1. Listening

Leaders have traditionally been valued for their communication and decision making skills. Although these are also important skills for the servant-leader, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others. The servant-leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps to clarify that will. He or she listens receptively to what is being said and unsaid. Listening also encompasses getting in touch with one's own inner voice. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, are essential to the growth and well-being of the servant-leader.

Larry Spears

It appears most appropriate that Larry Spears placed listening at the very top of his ten characteristics of a servant leader. It makes perfect sense. How could we possibly serve others, if we don't first listen to their needs? It seems almost too obvious to even dwell on it.

However, I am the first to admit that I have much to learn about true listening skills. Indeed, as I hope every married man (and woman) would attest to, learning to listen is a lifelong endeavor. There is a big difference between hearing and listening, and one does not imply the other: "Auntie Ying is not hard of hearing. She is hard of listening." [4] Successful listening requires empathy, and an openness and willingness to receive what the other person has to express. The caring listener will also strive to create an atmosphere in which others feel safe to express their opinions without fear of reprisal or ridicule. Paying attention to what is not being said can be even more important, and the servant leader will gently but persistently probe for what she thinks the other might be holding back for whatever reason.

Listening also requires introspection and personal reflection. What am I possibly letting get in the way of better listening? Am I really open and receptive to the opinions of others, even if they might seem far fetched or out of line? Am I perhaps anticipating the other's response, out of a subconscious belief that I already know their views and needs?

Listening can be a powerful and memorable experience. On one of my mission trips to Colombia, South America, my wife and I were teamed up with a Colombian missionary for an afternoon of reaching out to the shut-ins of a neighborhood in Cartagena. We visited the home of an elderly lady, and listened to her for several hours. As we learnt of the incredible hardships of her life, of poverty, sickness, raising a large family on her own after her husband had left her, I felt utterly helpless and thought to myself that I had nothing to give to this lady. However, I was unaware of the blessing that we had bestowed on her until she shared a few days later in a worship service how she had not had anyone for years with whom she had been able to share her story and who had listened to her.

What does Scripture have to say about the listening skills and practices of the Biblical leaders? A search for "listen" finds 470 verses in the Old Testament and 119 verses in the New Testament. The great majority of these verses refer to the student or subordinate listening to the teacher or superior. However, does that mean that the leaders themselves did not practice listening? I don't think so.

Moses listened to his father-in-law's suggestions (Exodus 18:24) for setting up a legal system. We'll return to this story in a later chapter:

Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and followed his suggestions.

Samuel's ministry began by listening when he was in the care of the high priest Eli (1Samuel 3:9-10):

⁹So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Yes, LORD, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed. ¹⁰And the LORD came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel replied, "Yes, your servant is listening."

While listening is a valuable and necessary skill for any leader, it is absolutely crucial in some professions, such as that of the judge. In several passages, judges are charged with "hearing" the cases brought before them, e.g. in Deuteronomy 1:16:

And I charged your judges at that time: Hear the disputes between your brothers and judge fairly, whether the case is between brother Israelites or between one of them and an alien. (NIV)

Nicodemus states the same in John 7:50-51:

⁵⁰Nicodemus, the leader who had met with Jesus earlier, then spoke up. ⁵¹"Is it legal to convict a man before he is given a hearing?" he asked.

Again, however, hearing and listening are not the same. Consider the case of the two prostitutes heard by Solomon in 1Kings 3:16-27. Both women had recently given birth to a baby, but one of the infants died. Now they were arguing over who the real mother of the live baby was. Solomon did not just hear their arguments, but he listened for the compassion of the real mother when he announced to have the baby cut in half:

²⁵Then he said, "Cut the living child in two and give half to each of these women!" ²⁶Then the woman who really was the mother of the living child, and who loved him very much, cried out, "Oh no, my lord! Give her the child--please do not kill him!" But the other woman said, "All right, he will be neither yours nor mine; divide him between us!" ²⁷Then the king said, "Do not kill him, but give the baby to the woman who wants him to live, for she is his mother!"

Jesus listened to the mother of James and John on behalf of their request, even though it was completely unreasonable (Matthew 20:20-22):

²⁰Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor. ²¹"What is your request?" he asked. She replied, "In your Kingdom, will you let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one at your right and the other at your left?" ²²But Jesus told them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of sorrow I am about to drink?" "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!"

Also, in several of Jesus' miracles it is recorded how he first asked questions and listened to those he was about to heal, e.g. in Mark 5:9, Mark 9:21, and Mark 10:51:

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked. "Teacher," the blind man said, "I want to see!"

Several verses also mention one of the governing worldly rulers listening in situations when the opinions of those talking were different from their own, e.g. Felix in Acts 24:24, and Herod in Mark 6:20:

And Herod respected John, knowing that he was a good and holy man, so he kept him under his protection. Herod was disturbed whenever he talked with John, but even so, he liked to listen to him.

In the business world, listening should be a natural part of the work of those who interact with customers. I sometimes have the privilege of representing the Protein Data Bank at scientific conferences, and we often have a booth in the exhibitors' area. Almost at every conference, someone will ask the question "So why do you have a booth? You are not selling anything?" We explain how much we value the outreach to our user community, and that we can't pursue the goal of keeping our Web site users happy without hearing from them about their needs and expectations.

During the course of a typical day, I find myself as a listener in many different situations, each with their own challenges. In the morning, I might listen to my wife telling me a dream that upset her, though it may not sound that frightening to me. I listen on the telephone to a coworker whose English is rather difficult to understand and I struggle just to get the words he is saying. I listen to my boss or my boss's boss, and pay special attention to their concerns, perhaps about deadlines or whether we are keeping up with the competition. I listen to co-workers who use programs that I am maintaining to find out whether I have made their tasks as easy as possible. I listen to requests for feature enhancements or bug reports, and try to understand their significance and scope so that I can make those often tough decisions on how to prioritize.

I listen to contributions in staff meetings that perhaps could have been left unsaid because they didn't really contribute, or where the argument might have been wandering rather than getting to the point, and I am challenged to listen attentively nonetheless. I listen to someone who didn't get their job done as I might have expected it, and I am challenged to give them the benefit of the doubt. On my walk back home, I listen to the voice inside of me that tells me whether I'm pleased with the day's work or whether I could have done better. Back at the house, I listen to my wife again to find out how her day has gone. I listen to my body and how I feel, and try to decide whether to go out that night or whether to stay home and get needed rest.

Personal relationships and multimillion dollar projects alike fail because of breakdowns in communication. In some cases, the right things might not have been said at the right time, but I suspect that in more cases what was said wasn't being listened to well enough. The servant leader thus has a great obligation, and a tremendous opportunity, to make a real difference by continually applying the art of listening. Each day offers countless opportunities for practice.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Can you recall examples of good and bad listeners in your life? What distinguished them?
2. How does one listen for what is not being said? What can you do to create an environment where more things are being said and fewer are left unsaid?
3. Can you give some examples of how Jesus was really listening, not just hearing? Can you think of Scripture passages where Jesus listened to what was not being said? How did he act?



2. Empathy

The servant-leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits. One assumes the good intentions of co-workers and colleagues and does not reject them as people, even when one may be forced to refuse to accept certain behaviors or performance. The most successful servant-leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic listeners.

Larry Spears

Empathy and listening are closely related. Listening without empathy is little more than hearing, but empathy means caring. The servant leader cares about his or her team members in a number of different ways. Of course, she cares about their work, and she sees to it that they have all the resources needed to accomplish their tasks. However, he also shows compassion for his employees in ways that go beyond just their performance at work. He will care about them not just as workers, but as whole persons who have homes, families, personal interests and hobbies, and so on. Of course, we are all entitled to our own privacy. Each person will have to set their own boundaries that determine what they want to keep to themselves. However, the servant leader will always make those who want to share their personal concerns feel welcome and safe to do so.

The word empathy is never used in the Bible, at least not in any of the common English translations (Amplified Bible, Contemporary English Version, Good News Bible, King James, The Message, New International Version, New Living Translation, New Revised Standard). Instead, the word compassion is cited many times. Empathy and compassion can be used almost synonymously. The word empathy is derived from the Greek *em-pathos*, where *pathos* means suffering. The word compassion comes from the Latin *com-pati*, with *pati* meaning to suffer. Passion, patience, and patient are all derived from the same Latin root. So, both empathy and compassion literally mean "with-suffering", that is to share someone else's suffering. In the book of Romans we are told to both rejoice and mourn with others (Romans 12:15):

When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow.

The Gospels are full of stories that show Jesus' compassion. He had pity for the sick he healed, such as the leper in Mark 1:41:

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" (NIV)

He compassionately cared for their worldly needs, for example when he turned water into wine at a wedding after the host had run out (John 2:1-20), or when he fed four thousand who had been with him for several days (Mark 8:2):

"I feel sorry for these people. They have been here with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat.

His empathy was not limited to people's physical needs, however, but he was also concerned with their spiritual needs. For example (Mark 6:34):

A vast crowd was there as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he taught them many things.

Perhaps the story of the death and resurrection of Lazarus is one of the most moving examples of Jesus' compassion. The following four verses are just a small excerpt from the story, but they particularly emphasize Jesus' sorrow (John 11:33-36):

³³When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, he was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled. ³⁴"Where have you put him?" he asked them. They told him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Then Jesus wept. ³⁶The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him."

However, the Bible makes it clear that the expression of empathy should not be limited to one's friends, or those in need of physical healing, but also to one's enemies. Jesus taught this about loving our enemies (Matthew 5:43-47):

⁴³"You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too. ⁴⁶If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.

One of my favorite stories of compassion is the story of Joseph, told over about twenty chapters of the book of Genesis. Joseph is hated by his brothers, in part because his father shows favoritism for him. They even make plans to kill him (Genesis 37:18), but instead sell him into slavery (Genesis 37:28). Joseph ends up in Egypt, and Pharaoh becomes so impressed with him that he appoints him as ruler over the entire country (Genesis 41:37-44). When famine strikes Canaan, his brothers make several trips to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, whom they don't recognize as their brother. Joseph is so overcome by emotion for his brothers, that he weeps repeatedly (Genesis 43:30, Genesis 45:2, Genesis 45:15). After their father dies, Joseph's brothers are afraid that they will now be paid back the evil they did to him, but Joseph instead has this memorable reply (Genesis 50:19-21):

¹⁹But Joseph told them, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, to judge and punish you? ²⁰As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people. ²¹No, don't be afraid. Indeed, I myself will take care of you and your families." And he spoke very kindly to them, reassuring them.

I think one obstacle to a more compassionate workplace is our inhibition to openly expressing our emotions. Most men have been taught early on not to cry, lest others think they're weak. I just attended a good-bye dinner for a dear friend who is moving from California back to Colorado. Many of his Christian brothers, with whom he had spent years in fellowship, openly shed their tears. I assure you, these men are neither weak, nor do they think of

themselves as being weak. In fact, their fellowship group is called the Mighty Men!

An interesting part of Joseph's story is how he dealt with the feelings brought upon him by the sight of his brothers. At first he retreats into his private rooms to weep. Later he just breaks down and his sobbing becomes known to the entire palace. This man, who allowed his emotions to flow freely, was the second most powerful man in all of Egypt. A mighty man!

What an improvement to our work places it would be if we didn't leave our emotions behind when we leave home to go to the office. Why shouldn't we cry with those who cry, and laugh with those who laugh, at work just as we do amongst family and friends? Many of us spend at least as many of their waking hours at work as they do at home. What goes around, comes around, so what do we have to lose by being a little more compassionate with our co-workers?

James Autry, in his book "The Servant Leader" [5], gives many practical examples of compassionate leadership in the workplace, such as caring for sick employees, perhaps even with life-threatening or terminal illnesses. One of the most practical ways of showing a caring attitude towards employees with special needs is to allow for flexible work hours.

There are many such examples where I work. To one, it would be a terrible waste of time to work the regular 9am to 5pm shift and fight the rush hour traffic twice each day. To another, work hours need to take into account the day care needs of young children in a home where both parents are working. To another, it's a chronic disease that brings about frequent doctor visits and days of generally ill health where working from home is the only option. To another, it's the constraints of orthodox Judaism that don't allow work on the Sabbath and on other special occasions.

Of course, the servant leader must carefully consider how addressing the needs of one individual affects all others in the organization. Flexible work hours for individuals, for example, must be balanced with the needs for formal group meetings, as well as more impromptu gatherings of project members to exchange ideas and thoughts, tips and tricks. Even in the programming business, where there are few technical limitations of

telecommuting, it is still often the quick chat with those in the office next door that spawns the ideas that save hours or days worth of work. So, while there are seldom easy answers, the servant leader's commitment to empathy in the work place is expressed by a determination to compassionately hear and consider the needs of all individuals.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Jesus wept. Joseph wept. When did you last weep? When did you last feel like weeping but felt inhibited to do so? What other cultural inhibitions to expressing emotion, compassion, and empathy do we have, both at work and at home?
2. What are the special needs of your employees or co-workers? What thought have you given to accommodating their special circumstances? What more could you do to ease their struggles? What would Jesus do?
3. Recall an example where you had to balance compassion for one individual with the needs of others. What were the specific conflicts, and how did you resolve them? Can you think of examples from the Bible where compassion for one person conflicted with the bigger picture?



3. Healing Ability

The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant-leadership is the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant-leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact.

Larry Spears

Healing and empathy are as closely related to each other as are listening and empathy. As stated in the last chapter, listening without empathy may be little more than hearing. Similarly, empathy becomes more meaningful if it can ultimately lead to healing. Certainly, we won't be able to heal all wounds, no more than the medical profession can cure some incurable diseases. In those cases, empathy may be the equivalent of alleviating the symptoms or numbing the pain of an illness that has no cure. Whenever possible, however, empathy should lead to healing, lest the caregiver might wear out or the cared for might lose faith.

This is not to say that most healing will be quick. To the contrary, especially when we are dealing with issues such as healing broken trust, we had better be prepared for a long course of treatment. The last two speakers at the Leadership Cafe of the San Diego Leadership Initiative were Ronnie Froman, the current CEO of the San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter of the American Red Cross, and Jerry Sanders, former Chief of Police of the San Diego Police Department. Both talked about what it took to either restore the trust of the community or to establish it in the first place. In the case of the San Diego Red Cross, a fiscal scandal had badly damaged the reputation of the chapter in the eyes of the public. Ronne's expectations were that any turnaround would take about two years! As it turns out, the overwhelming response of the Red Cross to an unprecedented fire storm, which ravaged most of Southern California and burnt thousands of homes, restored the Red Cross's image almost over night. As for the Police Department, Jerry talked about working with neighborhoods that had a long history of mistrust for the

police, and building up a trusting relationship with those communities did indeed take years.

The first thing that probably comes to mind when we think about healing in the Bible is the physical healing that Jesus performed on countless occasions. Here is what we find in just the first chapter of the gospel of Mark: In Mark 1:23-26, Jesus heals a man possessed by an evil spirit. In Mark 1:30-31, he cures Simon's mother-in-law who had a high fever. The next few verses (Mark 1:32-34) refer to "many sick and demon-possessed people" and "great numbers of sick people who had many different kinds of diseases", and at the end of the chapter (Mark 1:40-42) he heals a man with leprosy.

Fortunately, examples of healing in the Bible don't stop with Jesus' miraculous physical healings. I say fortunately, because we obviously don't have Jesus' godly powers, and most of us aren't even in the medical profession. (As an aside, one can be saving lives in less obvious ways. For example, it is quite fair to say that a lot of people wouldn't be alive today if it weren't for the data in the Protein Data Bank. Many of the latest AIDS drugs, for example, were specifically designed based on the structure of proteins in the PDB.)

Physical healing and spiritual healing rather went hand in hand, see for example Matthew 11:4-5:

⁴Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him about what you have heard and seen-- ⁵the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.

At times, Jesus even saw his ministry to the physically ill get in the way of his ministry to the spiritually ill. Jesus admonished some of those he cured not to tell anyone, but to little effect. The story of the leper being healed (see above) ends like this (Mark 1:43-45):

⁴³Then Jesus sent him on his way and told him sternly, ⁴⁴"Go right over to the priest and let him examine you. Don't talk to anyone along the way. Take along the offering required in the

law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy, so everyone will have proof of your healing." ⁴⁵But as the man went on his way, he spread the news, telling everyone what had happened to him. As a result, such crowds soon surrounded Jesus that he couldn't enter a town anywhere publicly. He had to stay out in the secluded places, and people from everywhere came to him there.

Much healing, in the Bible as well as in our lives, has to do with overcoming divisions and settling disputes. Many of Paul's letters were to churches in need of healing, but especially the first letter to the Corinthians. After a few verses of introduction, Paul gets right to the point in 1Corinthians 1:10:

Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.

Later in the same letter, Paul makes it clear that harmony requires treating all equally, regardless of rank or status. Drawing parallels between the parts of the human body and the members of the body of Christ, i.e., the church, he writes (excerpted from 1Corinthians 12:22-25):

²²In fact, some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary... ²⁴...So God has put the body together in such a way that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. ²⁵This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other equally.

With a bit of sarcasm, he also points out that some divisions are stirred up for the selfish reason of proving one's being right (1Corinthians 11:19):

But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that those of you who are right will be recognized!

The concept of unity was also enough on Jesus' mind, that he prayed this on his last night before he was arrested (John 17:11):

Now I am departing the world; I am leaving them behind and coming to you. Holy Father, keep them and care for them--all those you have given me--so that they will be united just as we are.

Sometimes healing is required in situations that probably could have been avoided altogether if proper servant leadership principles had been applied in the first place. Some of my work experience over the last few years falls into this category.

A few years ago I assumed one of the lead technical positions within our organization. It turned out that I had inherited not just a set of technical responsibilities, but also the task of healing some broken work relationships. Lack of good communication, misunderstandings, personality conflicts and other contributing factors had had a significant negative impact. Restoring or establishing successful work relationships required a dedicated effort over many months. Maintaining them, of course, is an ongoing effort.

To be honest, my initial reaction to some specific assignments was "why me?". In some cases, the answer was probably simply that I had the technical expertise and dedication to get jobs done that had been left undone. In other cases, perhaps I was trusted to have the necessary healing ability to deal with some sensitive issues (and I don't say this to boast, but only as a reflective hindsight).

Incidentally, our project is maintained across several geographically separated partner sites, and this makes successful servant leadership both more important and more challenging. For the last several years, annual retreats have been held where the staff from all sites come together for several days. I think these retreats have been a resounding success. Firstly, they have been instrumental in getting to know staff from the other locations. Secondly, this has then helped to sow some good seeds for such servant leadership characteristics as listening, empathy, and healing. Again, tending to those seeds must be an ongoing effort.

Many circumstances that require healing are very personal, such as physical or emotional pain, or perhaps the grief over the loss of a loved one. The servant leader tries to be just as sensitive to those personal issues, not only

because they clearly influence work performance, but more importantly because of the loving care for each individual in the organization.

To the Christian, the ultimate comfort in many of life's challenging circumstances is the spiritual healing that only Christ can bring. This should not be misunderstood, but the Christian servant leader might, in some sense, be more concerned with people's spiritual healing than with their physical or emotional healing. However, this brings up some issues as to what may or may not be appropriate in the work place.

Depending on one's place of employment, there may even be some hard rules about sharing one's faith, e.g. for teachers in public schools. In general, though, I would simply suggest that it be done with a great deal of sensitivity, and that it shouldn't create any tension or sense of discomfort for anyone at work. My co-workers are certainly aware of my Christian beliefs, but I don't go around preaching to them. I have offered to pray for particular needs, and I have always found those offers to be much appreciated.

For Thought and Discussion

1. What circumstances in different parts of your life are most in need of healing? In your personal life? In the life of your family? Your church-life? Your co-workers? How about your work place in general? How could you perhaps start to be a healing influence in each of these cases?
2. Have you found yourself involved in healing situations that perhaps could have been avoided with better servant leadership in the first place? Were there any lessons learnt and applied from these instances?
3. In what ways did Jesus heal people other than to cure their physical diseases? Can you find specific examples from his ministries to illustrate those healings? How can we try to emulate Jesus' non-physical healings?



4. Awareness

General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader. Awareness helps one in understanding issues involving ethics, power and values. It lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position.

Larry Spears

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This saying applies to servant leadership as much as to other areas of life. Awareness, I think, is the key to prevention. Most issues that a servant leader might have to address are dealt with much easier when they are faced early on. The same is true in other areas of life, for example personal health. We all would much rather prevent illness or at least become aware of it in an early stage, rather than being caught unaware by an advanced health disorder. The key is that we have to be aware of the potential threats. That's why there is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, National Autism Awareness Month, Brain Awareness Week, and so on, just to name a few of the top web search hits for "awareness".

There are two parts to awareness, awareness of one's self, and awareness of one's surroundings. I readily confess that in both cases the feeling of "I wasn't even aware of that!" is all too familiar to me. Let me illustrate with an example from each category.

While I have been singing in choirs for at least the last 20 years, a few months ago I resumed taking voice lessons after about a 10 year break. Almost as soon as I opened my mouth during my first lesson, it was rather obvious to my teacher that a number of things were seriously wrong with my technique, and the result was an ugly, dark and strained sound. It took several lessons to become aware of what exactly was wrong, such as tongue placement, lack of openness in the throat, etc. I'm well on my way to correcting these problems and producing a much more beautiful, bright, and vibrant sound. However, it will take time to overcome bad ingrained habits, and the damage control would have been much easier had I become aware of these mistakes years ago. Lack of self-awareness.

I make my living as a computer programmer. Recently I noticed that my laptop computer had become much slower than it used to be. I only fully realized there was a problem when the computer spontaneously turned off several times. The solution was rather simple, but quite startling. Enough dust had accumulated inside the computer that the fan no longer succeeded in cooling down the processor. The laptop did what it could to avoid overheating, first slowing down the number crunching, and then shutting itself off as a last resort. Blowing out the dust with some pressured air instantly tripled the performance! Furthermore, all of a sudden I had such a quiet laptop! Only then did I become aware that over months I had gotten used to a noisy fan constantly running on full speed. Lack of awareness of my surroundings.

Perhaps I may allow myself some small consolation by claiming that I'm in good company. We read this about Jacob, one of the great figures of the Old Testament, in Genesis 28:16:

Then Jacob woke up and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it."

More seriously, though, what do we learn from Scripture about awareness of Biblical leaders? Perhaps the most important arena for awareness is the field of conflict management. A number of passages demonstrate Jesus' keen awareness of arguments and his early intervention. Consider, for example, the following passage from Luke 9:46-48:

⁴⁶Then there was an argument among them as to which of them would be the greatest. ⁴⁷But Jesus knew their thoughts, so he brought a little child to his side. ⁴⁸Then he said to them, "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me. Whoever is the least among you is the greatest."

The disciples, who so often missed the point of Jesus' teaching, were arguing who would be the greatest. Jesus, however, was aware of this and didn't allow their arguments to go on. In what must have been a quite disarming

reply, Jesus used a little child to teach them a lesson about humility and servant leadership.

On another occasion, the disciples were complaining amongst themselves about Jesus' teaching. Jesus again tried to settle the argument, although in this case the resolution was that many of the disciples left him (excerpt from John 6:60-66):

⁶⁰On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" ⁶¹Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? ... ⁶⁶At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. (NIV)

The next example is not so much about an argument, but about the disciples' lack of faith and understanding of Jesus' teaching. Jesus' reply shows his commitment to the disciples' growth, and hence exemplifies another trait of a servant leader (Matthew 16:8-9):

⁸Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? ⁹Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? (NIV)

In the above cases, Jesus acted in the interest of the disciples themselves when he settled their arguments. In other cases, he got involved when their arguments were hurting others, such as the woman who poured expensive perfume on Jesus' head, much to the discontent of the disciples, who argued that the perfume should have been sold for a lot of money to be given to the poor (Matthew 26:10):

Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. (NIV)

Jesus was also very much aware of the thoughts and plans of his adversaries. In the healing of a paralyzed man recorded in Matthew 9:1-8, the teachers of religious law talked amongst themselves calling Jesus a blasphemer, but

Jesus "*knew what they were thinking*" (Matthew 9:4). Not long after that, the Pharisees were plotting to kill Jesus (Matthew 12:14). "*Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place.*" (Matthew 12:15, NIV).

Perhaps my favorite story of Jesus' self-awareness is the story of a woman who had been ill for 12 years and who pressed through a dense crowd to touch Jesus' clothes (Mark 5:25-34). After she succeeded, Jesus' reaction is recorded as follows (Mark 5:30):

Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

As the disciples point out in the next verse (Mark 5:31), the crowds were pressing against Jesus from all around him, yet Jesus felt the woman touching just the fringe of his robe. What awareness!

I think just a few examples from the Old Testament will suffice to round out this chapter's sampling of Scripture verses. Joseph was put in charge of two prisoners that had upset Pharaoh. We're told that each of them had a dream, and then this about Joseph's reaction the next morning (Genesis 40:6-7):

⁶The next morning Joseph noticed the dejected look on their faces. ⁷"Why do you look so worried today?" he asked.

In 1Samuel 2:22 we learn this about Eli, the priest who raised Samuel:

Now Eli was very old, but he was aware of what his sons were doing to the people of Israel. He knew, for instance, that his sons were seducing the young women who assisted at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

Finally, after quoting Jacob's being unaware of God's presence at the beginning of the chapter, it's time to exonerate him with regard to awareness (Genesis 31:1-2):

¹But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were beginning to grumble. "Jacob has robbed our father!" they said. "All his wealth has been gained at our father's expense." ²And Jacob

began to notice a considerable cooling in Laban's attitude toward him.

How do the examples of awareness of Biblical leaders translate into our lives as servant leaders? James Autry has a chapter in his book "The Servant Leader" [5] on conflict management and resolution, in which he talks about the importance of being aware of developing conflict in the work place. I started the first day of my current job in a meeting with my boss and two other programmers. I expected this meeting to be a briefing of what I needed to know to get started on my project. Instead, most of the meeting was spent on an argument between the other two programmers about what language I should be programming in. It didn't take much skill to become aware of that conflict!

Paying close attention to body language and facial expressions is an excellent means for awareness. A few years ago, my boss approached me after a staff meeting, asking whether I was ok, and saying that I looked depressed. I had felt discouraged by a work conflict that was affecting me very much, but I wasn't aware how much my countenance was showing it. Fortunately, my boss was aware.

Another important area of awareness concerns the effects that our actions and behaviors are having on others. At one time, there were issues with the quality of work by one member of our team. His job required paying close attention to detail with little margin for error. One day he told me that I made him feel like he was in the military. I was walking a fine line between necessary quality control and being too much of a Prussian policeman, and perhaps I had become too rigid.

On a personal level, I often find myself getting physically tight, such as clenching my jaw, with a tension headache sometimes being the result. I'm not quite sure of the underlying causes (this even happens to me in my sleep!), but stress or anxiety are the usual suspects. Judging from my performance reviews, I shouldn't have any reasons to be anxious (except that there's always too much to do, of course!), but I sure would like to be aware of those tensions before they develop into the next headache.

Let me close with my personal list of things I would like to become more aware of, although many items on this lists might apply to most individuals:

- awareness of my body language
- awareness of body language and facial expressions of others around me
- awareness of how I am affecting others
- awareness of how others are affecting me
- awareness of changes in attitudes
- awareness of developing conflict
- awareness of changes in physical appearance of others
- awareness of my nervous or other personal habits

For Thought and Discussion

1. Can you recount examples of situations where you were particularly aware (or unaware) of yourself or your surroundings? What lessons might be learnt from those examples?
2. What things are you generally most aware of? What things are you usually least aware of, and what could you do to increase your awareness of those?
3. Do you think we can learn from Jesus' extraordinary sense of awareness? Or do you think his awareness was simply a consequence of his divine powers and knowledge? Can you support your view with Scripture?



5. Persuasion

The servant-leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant-leadership. The servant-leader is effective at building consensus within groups.

Larry Spears

I like the following definitions of persuasion, first from Webster:

The act of persuading; the act of influencing the mind by arguments or reasons offered, or by any thing that moves the mind or passions, or inclines the will to a determination.

and then from the Encyclopædia Britannica:

The process by which a person's attitudes or behaviour are, without duress, influenced by communications from other people.

It is clear from these definitions that persuading and convincing are quite the opposite of pressuring or coercing. Persuasion contains elements of enticing and motivating the recipient that are absent from a forceful and commanding approach. Few could really argue against the fact that a persuaded worker would, at least in the long run, be more motivated and productive than the one who is just following orders. Yet the traditional, top-down management approach is driven by command and control. Perhaps the fear of the consequences of disobedience is a primary motivating factor in that model, but that is not genuine persuasion.

Perhaps all of us could easily recount experiences where persuasion opened inroads that were completely closed off to a more forceful approach. Santa Claus recently made my wife's lifelong dream of having voice lessons come through. Talented as my wife is in many areas (including singing), she is at the same time both quite shy and a bit of a perfectionist. That, of course, easily sets her up for episodes of self-doubt that question whether she's good

enough to deserve her lessons. When that happens, my knee jerk reaction might be one of "come on, you know better than that", but needless to say, any kind of forceful reply is bound to get me nowhere. Instead, gentle persuasion is far more successful in convincing her that she indeed has come a long way since just a few months ago, that her teacher just paid her this or that compliment, and so forth.

The powers of persuasion were already well known to the authors of Proverbs about 3000 years ago when they wrote (Proverbs 25:15):

Patience can persuade a prince, and soft speech can crush strong opposition.

So, how did Biblical leaders use persuasion? A number of references to persuasion in the New Testament are in the context of preaching and teaching. For example, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was foretold this by an angel (Luke 1:16):

And he will persuade many Israelites to turn to the Lord their God.

About Paul, Luke writes in Acts 18:4:

Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. (NIV)

Paul himself wrote in his second letter to Timothy (2Timothy 4:2):

Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.

Jesus was an extremely persuasive speaker. After the sermon on the mount, Matthew recorded (Matthew 7:28-29):

²⁸After Jesus finished speaking, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹for he taught as one who had real authority--quite unlike the teachers of religious law.

Many examples of how Jesus persuaded and often convicted others in nearly impossible situations are truly astonishing. One of my favorite examples is the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3-11). The scribes and Pharisees, as on many other occasions, were trying to trap Jesus into saying something they could use against him, either because it would violate the law of Moses (which commanded that the woman be stoned), or Jesus' teachings about love. When they kept pressing Jesus for an answer, he said (John 8:7):

"All right, stone her. But let those who have never sinned throw the first stones!"

After all the accusers went away quietly, Jesus turned to the woman in John 8:10-11:

¹⁰... "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" ¹¹"No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

We do not know what became of the woman after this encounter, but I suspect that she was as strongly persuaded and convicted of her wrongdoings as her accusers, the scribes and Pharisees, were of theirs.

If this essay so far has made rather few references to women in the Bible, it certainly is not because I think any less of them as leaders than I do of men. To the contrary, I believe many of the servant leadership principles probably come more naturally to women than they come to men. Unfortunately, women are quite underrepresented in the Bible as leaders. Ruth, however, is one of the more prominent women of the Old Testament (she has a whole book named after her!), and she offers us a good example of persuasion. After an exile forced by famine, Naomi was returning to Judah. Both of her sons had gotten married in the foreign country, and she wanted her daughters-in-law to stay with their people. Ruth, however, persuaded Naomi to let her come along (Ruth 1:15-18):

¹⁵"See," Naomi said to her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same." ¹⁶But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. I will

go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. ¹⁷I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!" ¹⁸So when Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Another example, although it turned out to be less successful, is that of Pilate's wife trying to persuade Pilate not to condemn Jesus (Matthew 27:19):

Just then, as Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him this message: "Leave that innocent man alone, because I had a terrible nightmare about him last night."

Without patting myself on the back for high marks on persuasion, I do not think of myself as a dominating or commanding person. Perhaps it is because I didn't resort to bullying others in return for being bullied myself a lot as a child. Perhaps it is because I have learned the lessons of gentleness through eight years of marriage to a sensitive wife, whom I love more than anything in the world. Perhaps it is because I am not even in a formal position of "power" at my place of work, since I don't have supervisory responsibilities for any of my colleagues, even though I have the lead technical responsibility for a project that involves the work of several team members. Perhaps it is because I have spent the majority of my professional life in academia, which emphasizes intellectual reasoning with others regardless of their rank, rather than following a chain of command.

Let me finish this chapter then with two thoughts. Firstly, even if I am not presently in a formal supervisory position, there are many other circumstances in which I might choose either power or persuasion. Such choices might manifest themselves in more subtle ways than giving orders versus trying to convince others. For example, body language or tone of voice might make a big difference whether someone might feel genuinely persuaded or somewhat coerced after all. My hope is that I will always be aware, or if necessary be made aware, whether or not I am using persuasion to the best of my abilities.

Secondly, the time will almost certainly come when I will have more formal personnel management responsibilities. May the principles of servant leadership be ingrained enough in me by then that I would never even be tempted by the inappropriate use of power instead of proper persuasion.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Can you recall an example where you failed to achieve your goal through a pressured approach, but succeeded when you switched to persuasion? How about the opposite, i.e. you first tried to convince, but found you had to command to obtain the objective? Can the latter ever be justified for a servant leader? Under what circumstances?
2. In your experience, what are the most successful techniques of persuasion? By what methods are you most easily persuaded? What are your most proven ways of persuading others? Your co-workers? Your spouse?
3. Read the Scripture passages where Jesus asked his disciples to follow him (e.g. Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14). How do you think the disciples felt? Pressured or persuaded? Coerced or convinced? What made them follow Jesus? Can you back up your views with other Bible passages? What about John 1:36-37?



6. Conceptualization

Servant-leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. The leader who wishes to also be a servant-leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking.

Larry Spears

Conceptualization, as Larry Spears points out in the above quote, is about the big picture, about long term objectives over short term goals, about strategic thinking over tactical day-to-day decisions. In today's busier and busier environment, the leader who takes time off from the hustle and bustle to think long-term is perhaps becoming an endangered species. The ever increasing pace of business leads to the expectation of faster and faster returns and responses. We have come to expect and demand almost instantaneous communication over any distance through email and other electronic means. Wall Street and the masses of Internet-enabled individual investors respond almost instantaneously to the slightest changes in real or perceived financial outlooks. Yet, to look beyond the immediate demands is imperative for any good leader, and for the servant leader in particular. When Google, the Internet search engine company, recently announced their plans for an initial public offering (IPO) of stock, they declared that they would not provide the quarterly financial reports that Wall Street almost requires, because they did not want their employees to get distracted from the company's mission by short term financial goals.

How does one follow the long road guided by the larger concepts, without becoming confused by the bends and turns of short term demands? The answer lies in developing and following a mission statement, which should act as a road and provide the necessary driving directions. Mission statements, of course, are nothing new, they have long decorated the walls of

corporate executive offices. Not all mission statements, however, are equally helpful, and many are so unclear or convoluted that no one remembers them or gets any direction from them. Perhaps more recently, personal mission statements have also become more common.

So, let's take a look at the mission statements of Biblical leaders, and how their actions were determined by the big picture. Jesus' mission was to be a Light to the world, to show us a better way, and he "stuck to his mission", as Laurie Beth Jones points out in her book "Jesus, CEO" [6]. In Mark 1:38, Jesus explained his mission to his disciples:

But he replied, "We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too, because that is why I came."

Jesus' primary mission was not physical healing, although he cured a great many from their diseases, either out of compassion, or to convincingly demonstrate his divine powers. His mission was spiritual healing, which is why after he healed the leper in Mar 1:40-42, he sent him away to see the priest and told him sternly: *Don't talk to anyone along the way* (Mark 1:44). Perhaps as a consolation to the rest of us, even Jesus struggled to keep to his core mission, as we find out in the next verse (Mark 1:45):

But as the man went on his way, he spread the news, telling everyone what had happened to him. As a result, such crowds soon surrounded Jesus that he couldn't enter a town anywhere publicly. He had to stay out in the secluded places, and people from everywhere came to him there.

In "The Path" [7], another of Laurie Beth Jones' books, she looks at the mission statements of several other Biblical leaders. One of her case studies is queen Esther, who is the only other woman besides Ruth to have one of the 66 books of the Bible named after her.

When Esther was chosen to replace Queen Vashti, her Jewish origins were kept a secret from King Xerxes. After Xerxes appointed Haman to be his highest official, Haman was upset by the lack of respect he received from Mordecai, Esther's cousin. In revenge, he plotted to destroy all Jews in Xerxes' kingdom. Esther's mission now became quite simply to save the

Jews. It was forbidden under punishment of death to see the king without being called by him. However, Esther kept the big picture in mind. As Mordecai pointed out to her in Esther 4:13-14, she was going to die anyhow:

¹³Mordecai sent back this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that you will escape there in the palace when all other Jews are killed. ¹⁴If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. What's more, who can say but that you have been elevated to the palace for just such a time as this?"

So, Esther decided she had nothing to lose, and she went to see the king, and he forgave her for it, spared her life, and ultimately that of all the Jews in his empire.

Great concepts and great missions can come about a number of different ways. Peter's mission, to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, came through a vision, a dream. Prior to this occasion, the Good News of Jesus the Messiah had been preached only to the Jews. Just before the Roman army officer Cornelius visited Peter in order to invite him to his house, Peter had a dream in which a voice told him to eat animals that were considered unclean by Jewish law (Acts 10:13-15):

*¹³Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat them."
¹⁴"Never, Lord," Peter declared. "I have never in all my life eaten anything forbidden by our Jewish laws." ¹⁵The voice spoke again, "If God says something is acceptable, don't say it isn't."*

Peter realized the meaning of his vision, and told his visitors in Acts 10:28:

... "You know it is against the Jewish laws for me to come into a Gentile home like this. But God has shown me that I should never think of anyone as impure."

Thus, the ministry to non-Jewish peoples got started, and before long *God's Good News was spreading rapidly, and there were many new believers* (Acts 12:24).

Great concepts and great missions can bring about great results. When Saul, who had been persecuting Christians with great fervor, became Paul and a Christian himself through his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-20), his mission became "to know Christ", as recorded in his own words in Philippians 3:10-11:

¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (NIV)

After Paul regained his sight from the temporary blindness he suffered during his conversion, we're told that *immediately he began preaching about Jesus* (Acts 9:20). Indeed, he started immediately, and never turned back, becoming a most effective instrument of spreading God's word, planting churches throughout the Mediterranean, and turning into the most prolific writer of the Bible, with more books attributed to him than any other author of either the Old or New Testament.

Incidentally, Paul's mission statement is picked up by the mission statement of our church, Solana Beach Presbyterian Church, which reads like this:

We commit to Know Christ, Grow in Christ, Go with Christ

This short mission statement arises first from the basics of our faith, which is our firm belief in the living triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It encompasses our vision statement, which is to be a growing community of fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Finally, it points to the mission of every Christian according to Christ's Great Commission, which is to reach out to the world, and to *go and make disciples of all the nations* (Matthew 28:19).

The mission statement of my current employer, the Protein Data Bank (PDB), is as follow:

*To provide the most accurate, well-annotated data
in the most timely and efficient way possible
to facilitate new discoveries and advances in science*

I am fairly confident that if we asked the 35 or so staff members of the PDB about its mission, we would hear 35 reasonably similar answers. This surely isn't true about many organizations. For example, some of the PDB's staff is logistically part of the San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC). A survey of SDSC's approximately 400 employees would probably produce rather divergent ideas of what its mission statement is.

The mission statement of the PDB acts as an excellent standard by which to make decisions about how to invest our resources. For example, as we are developing new features, we have to ask ourselves the following questions: Does the effort jeopardize our core mission, which is to provide data in the most timely and efficient way possible? Does the new feature increase the value of data annotation? Does it facilitate new discoveries and advances in science?

Finally, here is my personal mission statement:

*To glorify God, by using my talents for the benefit of mankind,
and by loving and serving those whom God has put in my care*

I do not think of this mission statement as vague, but rather as general enough to sustain changes in life's circumstances, such as my work environment. As a Christian, my primary purpose is to worship, serve, and glorify God. He is my Maker, and to Him belongs the glory for all that I accomplish. Johann Sebastian Bach, perhaps the greatest composer of all time, often signed his compositions *S.D.G.* for *Soli Deo Gloria*, that is *to God alone be the glory*. I feel the same about my humble works, even if they never remotely compare to those of a great master such as Bach. In my professional life, my talents have been mostly in the scientific arena. I can say without reservation that they are being used for the benefit of mankind in my current position for the Protein Data Bank, since many scientific and medical advances would not be possible if it were not for the data that we curate and make available to the general public. The last part of my mission statement, to love and serve those whom God has put in my care, applies to

both work and my personal life. Above all, it currently - and God willing for many more years - refers to my wife whom I love and adore. To love and serve her, to provide for her and support her, and to nurture the expression of her God-given talents in turn, is truly a worthy calling.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Does your company or organization have a mission statement? If it does, can you recite it from memory? Can you give examples where managers or other employees were clearly guided by the mission statement? How about examples of actions that were contrary to the mission of the organization? If your company does not have a mission statement (or you don't know what it is), what do you think the mission statement should be?
2. Do you have a personal mission statement? If you do, how does it guide you in your decision making? If you don't have a mission statement, consider the reflective process of developing one.
3. Pick one of your favorite Biblical characters, and develop a written mission statement for him or her. How did the person live out the mission statement? Provide Scripture passages for reference.



7. Foresight and Intuition

Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define, but easier to identify. One knows foresight when one experiences it. Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant-leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind.

Larry Spears

Foresight and intuition are perhaps some of the most distinctive qualities of a true servant leader. At the same time, they are probably harder to grasp and to nail down than most of the other leadership concepts. Foresight and intuition are not about making decisions based on careful analysis, or about following a clearly prescribed set of principles or guidelines. Rather, they are about making decisions based on a hunch or a gut feeling. The more analytically minded leader might hence be inclined to consider intuition less important. Not so. Just think about all the hiring decisions that you have made or witnessed throughout your career. How often did you just have a feeling that a candidate would work out well, but couldn't quite explain it? Or have you ever thought back about a hire that did not turn out to be successful, only to remember that you had a funny feeling during the interviews, but ended up quenching the gut feeling with some rational argument? If most opinions about job applicants are formed in the first 30 or 60 seconds of an interview, then intuition rather than analysis must clearly play a role.

Intuition and foresight can indeed be powerful skills, but they cannot be learned from books or courses. Instead, they have to be acquired through past experience and by trusting one's own instincts. An old Webster defines intuition like this:

A looking on; a sight or view; but restricted to mental view or perception. Particularly and appropriately, the act by which the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas, or the truth of things, immediately, or the moment they are

presented, without the intervention of other ideas, or without reasoning and deduction.

Intuition and foresight are rather personal skills that require introspection and contemplation. The two concepts are actually closer related to each other than the words might suggest. The Latin roots of intuition are *intuitio* (the act of contemplating) and *intueri* (to contemplate, to look at). So, "intuition" could be appropriately rendered "in-sight", "inner-sight", or "inner-seeing". In other words, intuition is about looking inward, and foresight is about looking forward.

Thinking about foresight in the context of Scripture, the prophetic qualities of many great Biblical leaders might quickly come to mind. Moses foresaw the ten plagues, Jesus foresaw Peter's denial, and his own betrayal and death, and so on. But even if we don't have the divine powers of Moses or Jesus, we can still benefit from a further look at the prophets in the Bible.

The first point to be made about the prophets is that they were held in high esteem. Consider, for example, the following verse from the first book of Samuel (1Samuel 9:6):

But the servant said, "I've just thought of something! There is a man of God who lives here in this town. He is held in high honor by all the people because everything he says comes true. Let's go find him. Perhaps he can tell us which way to go."

The importance that God gave to his prophets, particularly in keeping his people on the right path, is a recurring theme throughout the entire Bible, but the following quote from the second book of Chronicles (2Chronicles 36:14-15) may be a particularly good example:

¹⁴All the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful. They followed the pagan practices of the surrounding nations, desecrating the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. ¹⁵The LORD, the God of their ancestors, repeatedly sent his prophets to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and his Temple.

One might also think of the story of Deborah in the book of Judges (chapters 4 and 5). In various translations, the prophetess Deborah is described as either judging or leading her people, so it is clear that as a prophetess she held a high position. She went on to lead Israel in a battle that liberated the nation from an oppressive foreign king, and as a result *there was peace in the land for forty years* (Judges 5:31).

The second point to be made is that in the Bible prophesy and faith are closely related concepts. The writer of the book of Hebrews made this clear in the great chapter 11 on faith (Hebrews 11:32-33):

³²Well, how much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. ³³By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. [...]

What then is the meaning of faith? Well, volumes have been written to answer this question, but clearly, a few quick notes have to suffice in this context. The same 11th chapter of Hebrews from which the last quote was taken, defines faith in its first verse like this (Hebrews 11:1):

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (NIV)

2Corinthians 5:7 says that

We live by faith, not by sight. (NIV)

Easton's "Illustrated Bible Dictionary" from 1897 defines faith like this:

Faith is in general the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true [...]. Its primary idea is trust.

This last definition of faith brings us back full circle to Webster's definition of intuition earlier in this chapter. Acting according to intuition really is acting according to faith. Decisions involving foresight beyond the immediate present are decisions based on faith.

How then do we live and lead by faith? How do we use foresight and intuition?

Again, one must start by acknowledging that intuition and foresight are not about following certain recipes, but about trusting one's instincts. Perhaps then the first step would be to overcome the fear that intuitive decisions are irrational decisions lacking proper care and analysis.

Didn't most us (at least in Western cultures) marry someone we happened to have fallen in love with, rather than someone whom we carefully selected according to rigorous analysis of all contributing factors? (My apologies to any readers from cultures where marriages tend to be arranged.) My own marriage decision is actually a rather ironic case in point. Until I met my wife, I would have gladly lectured anyone that marriage should be carefully considered after a rather extended period of getting to know one's potential partner for life. Well, I proposed to Michele nine days (yes, 9 days!) after our first date, and five of those days we weren't even in the same country together. Lest anyone worry, we have now been happily married for over eight years. Clearly, intuition overtook rational analysis in that decision!

By and large, I am a person who has a more analytical than intuitive mind (or perhaps I have simply made more use of one over the other?). However, when I look back at my life so far, intuition has served me well in many important decisions and turning points in my life. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't; and if it feels right, we might as well follow our instincts.

Secondly, foresight is really a learned skill that comes from experience. As we cannot really predict the future, all we can do is reflect on decisions and their outcomes from the past, and based on that knowledge base make a guess about the likely future outcome of a decision to be made in the present. Again, this probably happens more intuitively than analytically, but it does require that we regularly take some time out to reflect consciously about our past and what we have learned from it.

Thirdly, intuition and foresight involve an element of trust. We have to be willing to trust our own instincts when we make decisions that we cannot explain rationally. Once again, it will be helpful to reflect back on our past and to recount important decisions where intuition has served us well. Most

decisions, however, affect not just ourselves but others as well, so ideally, intuition and foresight will flourish in a culture of mutual trust, within the organization or perhaps within our families. In such an ideal climate, followers are willing to trust their leaders even when their decisions don't seem rational, and leader can trust their followers that not all decisions have to be fully explained before they will act on them.

Finally, any use of foresight and intuition requires a willingness to accept and lovingly forgive mistakes. When we were children, we didn't learn to walk without falling down in the process. (Ok, some of us are better than others, as my wife tells me that she never even crawled, and when she decided it was time to walk, she never fell down. But then, my wife also taught herself to read before the age of three, so I'm simply not up to her standards!). We simply can't explore new territory without making mistakes and learning from them. At least until we will be with our Maker in heaven, we won't be perfect, which brings the following verses to mind as a close to this chapter (1Corinthians 13:12-13):

¹²Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now. ¹³There are three things that will endure--faith, hope, and love--and the greatest of these is love.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Look back at some of the major milestones and turning points in your life. On which occasions did your intuition serve you well? Are there other steps where you didn't trust your intuition, but in hindsight realize that you should have? Did your intuition ever fail you?
2. What important decisions do you have to make in the next weeks or months? Do you feel you have enough foresight? If you think back about your past, can you gain any helpful insights?
3. Did Jesus use intuition when he "hired" his disciples? Was there any evidence that they were successful candidates? How did things work out?



8. Stewardship

Peter Block (author of Stewardship and The Empowered Manager) has defined stewardship as "holding something in trust for another." Robert Greenleaf's view of all institutions was one in which CEO's, staffs, and trustees all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant-leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others.

Larry Spears

Stewardship is taking care of that which belongs to another. This basic meaning can take on different forms, such as taking care of someone else's money or goods, making responsible use of someone else's talents, or, to the Christian, taking good care of everything that God has entrusted to us: our money, our time, our talents, our entire lives.

Stewardship is a serious responsibility. Most people try to take good care of the things they own, they try to get the best interest on their money, they keep their cars well maintained, their houses and gardens in good shape, and so on. However, when we have been entrusted with looking after things that don't belong to us, we are usually even more careful. We would take extra care not to crash the car a friend let us borrow, and we wouldn't want to break anything in the house we are looking after while the owner is on vacation.

Just as we are careful with other people's material belongings when they have been put in our trust, we should sense the same responsibility in the other meanings of stewardship. For example, a manager who has been entrusted with the talents and careers of a number of employees should sense the responsibility of stewardship.

Paul made this rather clear in his first letter to the Corinthians (1Corinthians 4:1-2):

¹So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God's secrets. ²Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful.

Several other passages talk about the importance of stewardship, especially in proportion to how much has been given to us, and how much we are aware of our responsibilities. There is the warning in James 3:1, that teachers will be judged more strictly by God, and then there is this passage from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 12:47-48):

⁴⁷The servant will be severely punished, for though he knew his duty, he refused to do it. ⁴⁸"But people who are not aware that they are doing wrong will be punished only lightly. Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given.

Stewardship means doing the right thing when we are taking care of what belongs to others. Sometimes it is rather clear what the right thing is, such as in the story of the three servants who each were given a portion of their master's money (Matthew 25:14-30). Two of the servants invested well what was given to them and doubled the money. They received the praise they deserved (*Well done, my good and faithful servant*, Matthew 25:21), and were entrusted with greater responsibilities. The third servant, however, was afraid, hid the money, and had to return it without any gain. The consequences are summarized in Matthew 25:29:

To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away.

In other cases, however, the right thing to do may not be quite so obvious. Consider the story of the woman who poured a jar of expensive oil over Jesus' head (Matthew 26:6-13). The disciples thought this was a terrible waste of good resources (Matthew 26:8-9):

⁸The disciples were indignant when they saw this. "What a waste of money," they said. ⁹"She could have sold it for a fortune and given the money to the poor."

Yet, Jesus had a much different view, considered the woman's deed a good thing, and reprimanded the disciples for being critical of her (Matthew 26:10-13):

¹⁰But Jesus replied, "Why berate her for doing such a good thing to me? ¹¹You will always have the poor among you, but I will not be here with you much longer. ¹²She has poured this perfume on me to prepare my body for burial. ¹³I assure you, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be talked about in her memory."

Another example where the right thing to be done was in question is the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus was visiting their home, and while Martha was busy preparing the dinner, Mary sat down and listened to Jesus' teaching. Martha thought that was unfair, but Jesus' tender answer is recorded as follows (Luke 10:41-42):

⁴¹But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are so upset over all these details! ⁴²There is really only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it--and I won't take it away from her."

There is often a considerable emphasis on money when it comes to discussing stewardship. The last two examples, in contrast, speak to the stewardship of human resources. People, without doubt, are more important than money, or concerns about dinner preparations. An excellent example of what is expected of us when it comes to taking care of the needs of others is found in the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 34:1-10). In a literal sense, these verses talk about taking proper care of sheep, but figuratively, they also apply to taking care of people (Jesus is our Good Shepherd). Ezekiel 34:4 states the problem in no uncertain terms:

You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the broken bones. You have not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost. Instead, you have ruled them with force and cruelty.

A few verses later, the consequences of this behavior are stated equally clearly (Ezekiel 34:10):

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I now consider these shepherds my enemies, and I will hold them responsible for what has happened to my flock. I will take away their right to feed the flock, along with their right to feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths; the sheep will no longer be their prey.

Peter echoes this theme in his first letter, and shows how stewardship is at the heart of servant leadership (1Peter 5:2-3):

²Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly--not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. ³Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example.

Our calling, hence, is not just to care for and serve the people God has put in our trust, but to do it voluntarily, willingly, and gladly. This brings us back to the high standard that Robert Greenleaf has placed on true servant leadership with his quintessential definition [2]:

*The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one **wants** to serve. (emphasis added)*

What does the calling to faithful stewardship mean to me personally? What am I supposed to be a good steward of?

Churches often talk about the three "T"s of stewardship: Tithes, Talents, and Time (not necessarily in that order). The Biblical tithe refers to giving a tenth of our money, and to discuss this much further here would digress too much from the focus of this essay. Making the best use of my time and talents is reflected in my mission statement, which I shared in chapter 6:

To glorify God, by using my talents for the benefit of mankind, and by loving and serving those whom God has put in my care

Better time management must be near the top of most people's wish lists these days. Perhaps the common "I'm sorry, but I'm too busy" is one of the most prominent characteristics to define people in our time. Stephen Covey, in "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" [8] offers advice in the form of a time management matrix. Tasks are grouped into four quadrants according to whether they are urgent or not urgent, and whether they are important or not important. Being aware of this grouping of tasks helps to establish a proper balance, and to get the important things done without excessive stress or burnout.

Here are a few more specific examples of things or people that I am a steward of:

- God has entrusted to me as a husband one of his most wonderful creations, my beautiful and lovely wife Michele. Not only am I to provide for her financially and materially, but I am to nurture and encourage her God-given talents, vocations, and pursuits.
- As an employee of the Protein Data Bank, a public database, I am a steward of other people's data, and I am entrusted with both archiving and safekeeping it as well as making it publicly available to the best use for our society.
- Since our project is supported by government grants, I am ultimately a steward of taxpayers' money, and have a responsibility to fulfill our mission, and guarantee the public the best "return on investment" for their tax dollars.
- As a project coordinator and team member I am a steward of my co-workers' time and talents, and I should take care that their skills and time are being used in the most effective and beneficial ways possible (for their own good as well as for the good of the entire project).
- Living on the earth that God has created and over which He has given us dominion, I am to be a responsible steward of the earth's environment and not to be wasteful with its resources.

The list could go on and on. The point of this chapter is that everything is on loan to us from God, and that we have a high calling to be good stewards of that which has been entrusted to us. In this sense, while money matters,

people are the most important, and hence the servant leader has a serious responsibility to be a steward of human resources, that is the organization's people, and their time and talents.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Do you remember a time when someone else did not take good care of something you had entrusted to them? How did it make you feel? Does God feel the same way if we don't take good care of the things he has entrusted to us?
2. Make a list of the things and people in your care. Now evaluate your stewardship of each of the items on your list. Where do you do well? Where could you improve? How?
3. Read the twelfth chapter of Romans (Romans 12), and the twelfth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians (1Corinthians 12). What do these chapters teach us about stewardship with respect to our talents and spiritual gifts?



9. Commitment to the Growth of People

Servant-leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, the servant-leader is deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within his or her organization. The servant-leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues.

Larry Spears

The previous chapter talked about stewardship, which is taking care of that which belongs to another. Several examples of Jesus' attitudes towards stewardship, however, showed very clearly how people are far more important than money or things. Taking care of the people that God has put in our trust was a major emphasis of the last chapter.

This chapter is therefore a natural extension of the discussions about stewardship, by looking at the servant leader's commitment to the growth of people. People are the most important resource of any organization. To foster the personal and professional growth of its people is naturally in the best interest of the entire organization as well as its individuals.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, we see his constant commitment to the growth of the people that he interacted with. Let's revisit the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3-11). In the chapter on persuasion, we saw how Jesus convinced the scribes and Pharisees to drop their stones and their charges against the woman, and to abandon their attempt to trap Jesus into an answer they could use against him. Now, let's look at the end of this story, to see how Jesus was committed to this woman's growth (John 8:10-11):

¹⁰Then Jesus stood up again and said to her, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" ¹¹"No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

Go and sin no more. In sending the woman away with this command, Jesus gave her a second life. What greater opportunity for growth could there have been for her? She had expected almost certain death, and instead she was given a chance at a life without habitual sin.

Jesus performed many of his miracles out of compassion, but he often had other intentions as well. For example, we usually think of the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-15) as a story about Jesus' miraculous powers and his compassion for the hungry. In a sermon on October 19, 2003, Pastor Mike McClenahan of Solana Beach Presbyterian Church looked at this passage as a lesson in leadership. Perhaps, so he argued, Jesus was giving the disciples a chance to grow in their faith. In verse 5, Jesus asked Philip how they would feed the multitude of people (John 6:5). The next verse then goes on to comment that Jesus *was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do* (John 6:6), providing perhaps the best evidence that Jesus indeed had other motives besides feeding 5000 hungry people.

Perhaps there is no greater case study of personal growth in the Bible than to follow Peter's ministry, both before and after the death of Jesus. The first story that came to my mind was Matthew 14:25-33, in which Jesus walked on water. When Peter saw Jesus, he wanted to do likewise, and Jesus encouraged him and let him try. At first, Peter even succeeded, but then he was overcome by fear and started to sink. Jesus rescued him and then explained that he just didn't have enough faith.

When we look at the first few chapters in the book of Acts, we realize just how much Peter had grown in his faith in a short while. In the first chapter (Acts 1:15-26), it was Peter who started the process of choosing a new twelfth disciple to replace Judas, the one who had betrayed Jesus and then found his own death. In doing so, Peter both continued the ministry, and gave Matthias, the new disciple, a chance to grow. In the second chapter (Acts 2:14-40), Peter started his preaching ministry with great results, as 3000 people became believers that day (Acts 2:41). In the third chapter (Acts 3:1-8), Peter no longer lacked the faith to perform miracles when he healed a man who had been lame from birth.

Now, looking at the fourth chapter, we find a compelling example of the good that can come from giving someone a second chance (as pastor Neal

Nybo preached on June 20, 2004, at Solana Beach Presbyterian Church). Of all the characters in the Bible, perhaps Peter is the one with whom we most sympathize for getting a second chance. How crushing it must have been for Peter to have found himself denying Jesus three times in short order (John 18:17-27), just as Jesus had predicted earlier (John 13:38):

Jesus answered, "Die for me? No, before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.

Jesus, however, did not give up on Peter, but forgave him for what he had done, and wanted him to grow. After his death and resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples, including Peter (who was also called Simon). Jesus asked Peter three times "Do you love me?", and Peter answered three times "You know I love you" (John 21:17):

Once more he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep.

(The real power and meaning of this passage is actually lost in the translation from Greek to English. The original Greek text uses two different words for love in this passage: *agape*, which is the stronger word and means to love in a moral sense or to love dearly, and *phileo*, which is the lesser word and means to be fond of or to befriend. The first two times, Jesus asked the tougher question, "Do you *agape*-love me?", to which Peter answered, "You know I *phileo*-love you." The third time, Jesus used Peter's language, and asked, "Do you *phileo*-love me?" It is this change in language that indicates in the Greek language that Jesus accepted Peter on his terms.)

Now we return to the events in the book of Acts, and see how Peter's second chance really came when he and John were arrested and questioned about their preaching (Acts 4:7):

They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

This time, Peter did not deny his Lord, but boldly proclaimed him (Acts 4:10):

Let me clearly state to you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed in the name and power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, the man you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead.

and his interrogators *were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John* (Acts 4:13).

I think these stories are powerful examples of what the commitment of one person (Jesus) to the growth of another (Peter) can accomplish.

Being committed to another person's growth means having that other person's best interest at heart. Looking back at the bosses, mentors, teachers, managers, and supervisors under whom I have worked throughout my career so far, there is an obvious difference between those who had my best interest in mind, and those who were perhaps more concerned about their own bottom line.

I clearly remember how some ten years ago, one of my Ph.D. supervisors showed his commitment to my professional growth. One of the most important tasks that any researcher must learn is how to write successful scientific publications, "papers" as they are usually called. When I gave the first drafts of some of my papers to my mentor, I was rather surprised by how little he edited them. I felt slightly frustrated to receive only general guidance such as "this is not convincing" or "that is not conclusive". I was thinking "couldn't he be a bit more specific, or just write a better paragraph for me?" In hindsight, of course, I realize how he was guiding me to develop my own successful writing skills. Only after I had made sufficient progress in the general concepts of a paper, would he then become more specific and detailed in his editing. While that approach felt somewhat painful to me at the time, it clearly had my best interests at heart.

One of the important catalysts of growth is the acquisition of new knowledge. A leader can encourage others to learn in a number of different ways. Often, just the invitation to take time off from perhaps a repetitive or tiresome job in order to attend a class or seminar can unleash new creative

energies in the employee. Many institutions, especially academic ones, have sabbaticals that allow a break from the regular job location and duties after a given length of service. Financial incentives can also be used. Of course, many organizations will pay for the cost of an employee's continued learning, but others have gone even farther by giving out knowledge rewards instead of performance awards, that is they will pay extra bonuses for successfully completed job-related training.

It is important, of course, to realize that even with our best commitment things may not always work out. Usually, we would want to make all reasonable attempts to allow an employee to grow in his or her current position in the organization. Everyone deserves a second chance, and in most cases a third, or fourth. Sometimes, however, it becomes clear that a person is just not the right match for the job. In those cases, it is in the best interest of all to communicate that in a caring, but honest way without delay, and help the person find a different position within, or if necessary, outside of the organization. For more on the subject of what to do when things go bad, see James Autry's "The Servant Leader" [5].

Commitment to the growth of others also includes a commitment to training one's potential successor. Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges write about this in "The Servant Leader" [9]. They point out that one of the most defining differences between a servant leader and a self-serving leader is whether the leader will freely pass on knowledge, or rather withhold it in fear or insecurity. I recall working for a supervisor who constantly criticized the work of his employees, and yet withheld important knowledge and documentation that would have made it much easier for them to do a good job. If such reluctance of knowledge transfer is driven by fear, then that fear is almost always unjustified and misplaced. As my current boss once said to me: "Training a new employee to potentially take over your job frees you up to advance to the next position yourself." Passing the torch can be and should be a win-win situation.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Do you remember a favorite teacher in your life? What made him or her special?
2. Can you think of anyone in your work place (or in your personal life) who might be stagnant instead of growing? What could you do to facilitate new personal or professional growth for that person? How about yourself? Where do you need encouragement to grow?
3. An important aspect of growth is how to deal with failure. Read the two accounts of Jesus healing a boy from seizures in *Matthew 17:14-20* and *Mark 9:14-29*. Both accounts refer to the fact that the disciples had earlier failed to heal the boy. How did Jesus approach the disciples' failure? Can we learn anything from it?



10. Building Community

The servant-leader senses that much has been lost in recent human history as a result of the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives. This awareness causes the servant-leader to seek to identify some means for building community among those who work within a given institution. Servant-leadership suggests that true community can be created among those who work in businesses and other institutions.

Larry Spears

Leaders do not work in isolation, but they lead groups of people who have something in common, a particular interest or belief, a work location, a neighborhood. In other words, leaders exist only in the context of communities. Building community is hence a natural part of being a servant leader.

God did not create us to be alone or to function in isolation, but to live and work in community with others. After God created man (that is the first man, Adam), we read in Genesis 2:18:

And the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him."

In the twelfth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, he talks about the need to be in community, because we all complement each other with our different strengths and talents. Paul draws a comparison between the human body and the body of Christ, that is the church, or the community of believers (Romans 12:4-5):

⁴Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.

Paul treats this concept of community again in his first letter to the Corinthians (1Corinthians 12). He points out that we have received our godly gifts not just for our own good, but for the common good (1Corinthians 12:7):

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (NIV)

Moses was the preeminent leader of the people of Israel, and formed the community of God's people in the Old Testament. Moses got his commission from God in the book of Exodus (Exodus 3:7+10):

⁷Then the LORD told him, "You can be sure I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries for deliverance from their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering.

¹⁰Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

Four large books of the Bible (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) are filled with the accounts of how Moses led the Israelite community over more than 40 years, until they reached the promised land (Deuteronomy 34:4-5):

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I told them I would give it to their descendants. I have now allowed you to see it, but you will not enter the land."⁵So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, just as the LORD had said.

Most importantly, Moses held the community together in times of quarrels, such as when the people rebelled against him for lack of food in the desert (Exodus 16:1-3):

¹The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. ²In the desert the whole community grumbled against

Moses and Aaron. ³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death." (NIV)

God then promised and promptly delivered bread and meat in the form of manna and quails, and Moses addressed the grumbling Israelites (Exodus 16:6-7):

⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" (NIV)

Dealing with discontent and divisive issues is a most important part of building community, because if left unchecked they can be so destructive. It is not surprising then, that this is also a prominent theme in the New Testament. In the chapter on awareness, we already examined how Jesus addressed arguments in the small community of his disciples.

After the death of Jesus, the Christian community arises, that is the community of believers in Jesus as the promised Messiah. (See the book of Acts, and especially its second chapter, Acts 2, for the beginnings of the early church.) Peter and Paul become the foremost leaders of the Christian church in its first decades. In his many letters to individual churches, Paul often stressed the importance of harmony, for example in 1Corinthians 1:10:

Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.

New communities usually start as groups of like-minded individuals, in this case as a group of Jews who believed that Jesus was the Son of God. As those communities grow, they have to deal with the question of diversity,

that is essentially the question of how inclusive they want to become. This was true for the early Christian church, which debated whether the Gospel should be preached only to the Jews, or to the Gentiles as well. In the tenth chapter of Acts (Acts 10), we see Peter's struggle with this issue, and how God intervenes through a dream (in which Peter was told to kill and eat "unclean" animals), and Peter's encounter with the Roman centurion Cornelius. The following verses summarize how Peter's beliefs were turned around (Acts 10:28,34-35):

²⁸Peter told them, "You know it is against the Jewish laws for me to come into a Gentile home like this. But God has shown me that I should never think of anyone as impure.

³⁴Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God doesn't show partiality. ³⁵In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.

Paul was clearly the strongest proponent of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, and making the Christian community a more inclusive one. We read that Paul was *trying to convince the Jews and Greeks alike* (Acts 18:4), and his three missionary journeys attest to his efforts of reaching out to many nations.

Paul made it clear, that the body of Christ, the community of believers, is a diverse one with respect to race, cultural heritage, gender and social status. First, in 1Corinthians 12:12-13 we read:

¹²The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up only one body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into Christ's body by one Spirit, and we have all received the same Spirit.

and again, in Galatians 3:28:

There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians - you are one in Christ Jesus.

Most organizations nowadays are very large and accordingly diverse. This diversity is an asset, but also a liability. A diverse group of people can only become a true community when all are willing to look past their differences and to focus on what they have in common. I work on the campus of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), which is a community of more than 50,000 people from all over the world. UCSD has a set of principles of community, which include such values as quality of life, dignity, cultural diversity, tolerance, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, and decency.

A characteristic of today's urban America is the separation of work and home. Long gone are the days of store owners living on top of their family owned businesses. Instead, the typical American may belong to two or three separate communities, a work community in one location, a living community in another, and perhaps a worshipping community in yet a third location. This separation is dangerous, because it diminishes the time spent in each community and hence in each case decreases our sense of belonging and identity.

A sad case in point is the apartment complex in which my wife and I lived for the first six years of our marriage. In all those years, I barely got to know our next door neighbors, yet our building alone had 16 apartments, and I never even met most of the other inhabitants. Our current townhouse complex feels much different. Within six weeks of moving in, we had met more neighbors than in the six years of living in the apartment complex. Perhaps it is the fact that many of our neighbors are retired and spend more time at home. Perhaps it is the common sense of ownership that helps create a stronger community. Nonetheless, I must confess that I should be doing more to establish and strengthen ties with our neighbors.

On the other hand, I do try to diminish the separation between home and work. I live only two and a half miles from the office, and walk to and from work most days. My wife is a gourmet cook and she loves to entertain. We have had most of my co-workers and bosses over to dinner at our place at least once. Recently, a woman from our New Jersey location spent a three month sabbatical in San Diego. We had her over for dinner several times, and she told us that those dinners were her only home cooked meals outside of her San Diego apartment. More importantly, though, my already good

working relationship with her has been strengthened even further, and my wife has gained a new friend.

As I finish this essay on servant leadership, I contemplate my challenges for the months and years to come. First, I pray that God will help me to grow as a servant leader, and to serve those whom he has put in my care. I hope that as I serve others, I can spread the concepts of servant leadership, and hence contribute to a better world in which to live and work. May I be measured against Robert Greenleaf's [2] definition of servant leadership, in which he wrote

The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?

For Thought and Discussion

1. Think about the various places where you have worked, and about the neighborhoods in which you have lived. How much sense of community did you feel in each of those places? If some were stronger than others, what were the differences between them?
2. Make a list of the desirable qualities of community, such as safety, strength, trust, etc. As communities grow, how are each of these qualities affected?
3. Consider the disciples during Jesus' ministry. What did Jesus do to build this community? What principles of community were evident from Jesus' interaction with the disciples? Please support your answers with Scripture references.

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~~~ Soli Deo Gloria ~~~

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