

Becoming World Changers
Finding PEACE by Doing P.E.A.C.E.
Empowering Servant Leaders
Feb. 10, 2008 Mark 9:33-37

Video Intro: It is Time!

Today, we want to explore the second important commitment that leads to biblical PEACE and that is the empowerment of Servant Leaders. To engender and empower the servant heart and life is one of the church's most important roles. The church should be a womb, an incubator and living-laboratory-school for leadership development. Not every one in a church will be a leader (or is even called to be a leader), but everyone is called to possess what every God-honoring leader cannot live and minister without...and that is a servant's heart.

I suppose it's not surprising to any of us as we read our news papers and watch the news on TV that leaders in every realm of civic life (whether it's religious, business, education, medical, political or sports/arts and culture) have increasingly shown their true colors of compromise, collusion and conspiracy to cover up. Our Society's report card on integrity and sincerity has not been very good in recent years. That's because leadership is both a REFLECTION and a REPRODUCTION of what is alive and growing in our larger culture.

Self-serving leadership reproduces and reflects a self-serving people. When we mistakenly enter into a life of self-absorption (the "all-about-me" life) and see ourselves with an inflated sense of importance, that heart gives birth to a lifestyle of posturing, jockeying, positioning and consuming. Paul warns us about the gravitational pull of this thinking: **"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you" (Romans 12:3 TNIV).**

There's a lot more involved in becoming a true leader than just getting yourself to the head of the line! The disciples of Jesus had to learn that the hard way. On one occasion, they were all walking through Galilee on their way into the town of Capernaum. Jesus had been telling them as they walked along that he was going to be delivered over and killed, but never mind those peripheral details, there was a more important conversation going on that had to do with the disciples position and promotion. When they arrived and got settled in, Jesus gathered them together and had what we call a little "come-to-Jesus" conversation. This is how it played out: **(*Mark 9:33-37 TNIV).**

Seems that the disciples had a "LEADERSHIP-PERCEPTION" problem! They were all excited to get to the head of the line and sign up for their front row seats! Have you ever been at a public event where crowds are amassed and when the doors open up, it's frantic mayhem racing to the front of the auditorium? That's the mind-set that was present in the disciples that is

found free-floating all across American culture. Jesus started to instruct them on SERVANTHOOD LEADERSHIP.

Although the concept is as old as time, the phrase was popularized in American culture back in the 1970's by Robert Greenleaf. It's been a common phrase ever since but an all-too uncommon character. You'd think it wouldn't be too much of a problem to get to the bottom as-it-were, but when it comes to servant hood leadership, apparently it's all an uphill climb.

So just what is "SERVANTHOOD LEADERSHIP" and why is it so important for the church to focus in on today? Is servant hood leadership about increasing volunteerism? According to research gathered by *Time* magazine just four months ago, passion for volunteerism and service in America is growing:

- **Since its start in 1994, 500,000 volunteers have gone through AmeriCorps.**
- **In 2006, 61.2 million Americans dedicated 8.1 billion hours to volunteerism.**
- **Overall, 27 percent of Americans engage in civic life by volunteering.**

Time Magazine, September 10, 2007

Volunteerism is an awesome sign of goodwill and giving. But God wants something more than just your time. He wants your heart. Every servant is a volunteer, but not every volunteer is a servant. So what makes or defines a person a "SERVANT?"

- **Not a "Doormat" to be walked on**
- **Not the Task(s) entered into**
- **Not your position or status**
- **Not the hardest/longest worker**

To truly be a servant (biblically speaking), you have to have the mind of Christ, the will of the Father and the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. What did Paul say: **"In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus. Christ himself was like God in everything. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit. But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant. And when he was living as a man, he humbled himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death—death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8 NCV).**

What I love about true servant leaders is that they are confident of God's call. They have no ax to grind and no soap-box to stand on. Their great love is to bless others and give themselves away to other people. They are "at-home" in their own skin and not busily occupied chasing after somebody else's dream or a marketing air-brushed illusion. True servants are "all-of-the-work-and-none-of-the-credit" kind of people. They are humble in spirit and their great delight is to share life. They have discovered the secret to Joy. **Bill Easum** said it this way: **"Life comes to us on its way to somebody else!"** Jesus said it this way: **"Whoever loses their life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39 TNIV).**

We should not lose sight of the fact that biblically speaking, a servant works for a Master. Servants want to please the Master. To be a servant, biblically speaking, was not a 9 to 5 job where you punch a clock and go home to a Tyson frozen dinner and Charlie Gibson. To be a servant is your life role, your identity, the substance of who you are and what you do 24/7.

So why do we need to Equip Servant Leaders today? Because Servant leaders replicate and reproduce servant leaders. They help to set the bar high and create a culture of God-chasers instead of self-gratification chasers. It's a movement our world desperately needs today. It's what Jesus was trying to pound into the head and hearts of his disciples.

The Bible tells us he sat down (that's what Rabbis do when they are about to teach or make an important pronouncement). He called his disciples together – and taking a little child in his arms, began to teach them about TRUE GREATNESS. Now Jesus didn't do that because the people of his day had some kind of romanticized vision of children as being pure and innocent, noble, obedient and always good natured. The whole point of the child was to pull out the "HONOR SCALE" that the disciples had been chasing and point to the opposite end. Children were people who had no power, status and very few rights. They were socially invisible, easily ignored, dependent, vulnerable and subject to control and domination without anyone knowing or protesting. They represent the ones that nobody misses; the ones that are tolerated but not embraced. They represented, says, Jesus, God Himself – to welcome them was to welcome God.

Greatness comes, said Jesus, when you shower these ones with love in my name. They are the "Least of These" that Jesus came to befriend and fulfill: **"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:40 TNIV).** Jesus was trying to help the disciples understand that if you want to stand tall, you have to stoop low. If you want to receive honor one day, then you have to give honor where honor is due. Speaking of the place and focus of honor, Paul reminds us of this important Servant Leader perspective: **"And the parts of the body we think are less deserving are the parts to which we give the most honor. We give special respect to the parts we want to hide" (1 Corinthians 12:23 NCV).**

So what does this all mean for us today? It means that every single one of us is called to cultivate a servant's heart regardless if we ever serve as leaders. It means that infecting society and culture with this servant life-orientation is the only hope we have of shifting the course of over-self-absorption and consumption. That means, we must learn to live with and carry the banner of a saved life that is well lived. **Max Lucado** put it this way: **"The sign of the saved is their love for the least."** Is that who you spend your time thinking about, helping, loving and serving?

Has your heart received the burden that lives in God's heart? Maybe it's time for a shift. Maybe it's time to do something outside of our normal patterns and rhythms. Maybe it's time to encounter and rediscover the frontier of the mission again. Let's not become so self-absorbed that we

Edge God Out. That's what Human EGO does (**E.G.O. = Edge God Out**). Let's link arms and join hearts and go out and change our community and restore hope, life and Joy! Maybe it means taking the high road when your colleagues want you to fudge the numbers, cut corners or misrepresent the results. Maybe it means learning to love and value the very ones we have either feared, detested or ignored. Maybe it means we need to stop feeding our anxious (scarcity-driven) spirits of self preservation that have us convinced if we don't get it for ourselves no one else will. Life comes to us on it's way to somebody else. Why not give some away today! Amen.