



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Servant Leadership (Proverbs 27:17)

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Dave DePue, Ph.D. / (785)249-7604 / www.capitolcom.org / dave.depue@capitolcom.org

Challenging class discussion questions:

How many people are on your support team?

How loyal are your team members?

What examples of sacrifice do you see in the work?

Are you frustrated managing all of the inputs?

INTRODUCTION

This Bible study shows how to promote a vibrant, synergistic leadership team. What is synergy? This occurs when the impact of the total effort is greater than the sum of what each individual's input is capable of. Our notes will include historic examples and a sample performance appraisal for leaders and team members.

RELATIONSHIPS

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.¹

The operant term in the above verse is "friend." Hierarchical – top-down organizations typically only add inputs rather than exponentially multiply talent. The organization that is closer to a horizontal structure allows for critical interaction and continuous improvement. Wisdom teacher Solomon tells us: ***Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy*** (Proverbs 27:6). Government leaders are especially vulnerable to praise and compliments from those who are seeking favor. Do you have friends who tell you the truth and share honest criticism? We have seen highly qualified candidates lose elections partially because they did not listen to those working at the grassroots level.

SHARING

John 15:15 "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."²

Jesus shifts the perspective from servant, employee, or staff member to friend. He transitions to sharing plans and reasons why. Jesus related to His disciples (and us) as family members, calling them brothers (Luke 22:32). The metaphor of family is a powerful tool used by urban gangs to recruit and gain loyalty. The team member/family approach has transitioned from the sports arena to the business world. Team leader/member training has driven the profound quality improvements in our contemporary manufacturing and service industries. Do you include team members in your planning and show concern for the affairs of each individual member?

UPSIDE DOWN THINKING

Matthew 23:11-12 "The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."³

The above verses were part of a performance review for twelve members of Jesus' first leadership team. The ongoing critique was prompted by discussions heard while they were walking (Mark 9:33). The disciples were arguing over which of them might have the highest rank when Jesus came into His Kingdom. He explained that their thinking was upside down. The most humble servant will be exalted to the highest position in the Kingdom of God. This is similar to elected positions in a democracy. Levels from local officials to senators, representatives, governors and president being accountable to more and more individual citizens.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

John 13:12-15 After washing their feet, Jesus put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."⁴

BIBLE STUDIES – DURING SESSION

LEADERS/LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS 7 – 7:50 A.M., CAPITOL - ROOM 142 SOUTH
STAFF & GUESTS: WEDNESDAYS NOON HOUR CAPITOL - ROOM 142 SOUTH

Servant Leadership (Proverbs 27:17))

Travelers during the first century trod on dusty paths in bare feet or, at best wore open sandals. Hosts customary assign the lowliest servant to the chore of rinsing and wiping the feet of guests. On the evening before the Jewish Feast of the Passover, Jesus and His leadership team were sharing a meal. No foot washing servant was available and none of the disciples were willing to wash the feet of their peers. They were shocked when Jesus stooped to wash their feet. By this example, Jesus taught selfless service that was supremely exemplified by His death on the cross in payment for our sins.⁵

THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY

*Philippians 2:5-7 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*⁶

Servant leadership is a most difficult concept for us to grasp. However, the example was given us by the One who had ultimate authority. Here is what was said of Jesus by the disciples, “Even the winds and the sea obey Him” (Luke 8:25). A legion of demons addressed Jesus as “Son of the Most High God” (Mark 5:7). A group of religious leaders said, “Who is this who even forgives sins (Luke 7:49). The voice of God thundered from heaven, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5)! All of us “lesser” leaders must learn to serve those who we aspire to lead. Following Jesus’ model gives us the opportunity to achieve greatness!

SERVANT LEADERSHIP APPRAISAL POINTS

Outstanding NBA coach Pat Riley wrote about “the danger of me” in his book on teamwork. He stated, “The most difficult thing for individuals to do when they’re part of a team is **to sacrifice.**”⁷ This is seen when a basketball player attempts a difficult shot while another teammate is in a better position to score. As a team member, are you sometimes more concerned with receiving recognition than reaching the greater goal?

Jesus came from heaven to suffer with humanity. He was able to relate with us, offering grace (Hebrews 2:10-18). For example, a business owner brings in his son-in-law as a partner, but requires the young man to work in a variety of areas before being promoted to executive management. As a leader, do you help with cleanup duties to **better relate** with team members?

Do those you lead **grow as persons**? Jesus taught that service is the legitimate path to leadership. Jesus stated that even He did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). Writer Robert Greenleaf states that there are two extremes in types of leadership: The leader-first and the servant-first.⁸ Jesus was servant first even though He had ultimate authority. Are your team members becoming healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more like servant-first leaders?

How is power used in your organization or team? Writer Leighton Ford observes that, “Next to truth, the power question is the most important issue for the leader.”⁹ Jesus consistently used His power to serve others and called us to follow in example (John 13:15). The Apostle Paul gives practical guidance in 1Timothy 5:1-25). The key is to **treat team members as family**. Are the qualities of care, concern and love for one another coming through as top priorities?¹⁰

In summary:¹¹ Define what your image will look like. Is it a genuine interest in others (Philippians 2:20-21)? Next make it clear whom you serve. Timothy served those assigned him by Paul while both served the Lord. Finally, Jesus taught that the greater the service, the greater the leader will be (Matthew 20:26-28).

¹ The Holy Bible. New Living Translation. (Tyndale House). 2004.

² The Holy Bible. New International Version. (Biblica). 1984.

³ The Holy Bible. New Living Translation. (Tyndale House). 2004.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). p1577.

⁶ The Holy Bible. New International Version. (Biblica). 1984.

⁷ Pat Riley, The Winner Within. (Riles and Company, Inc.).1993.

⁸ Robert K. Greenleaf, Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness. (Paulist Press). 1991. p13.

⁹ Leighton Ford, Transforming Leadership. (InterVarsity Press). 1991. p140.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Boa, Buzzell, and Perkins, Handbook to Leadership: Leadership in the Image of God. (Trinity House Publishers).2007. p521.