

# SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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*Outline for the lesson are:*

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**Introduction:** Greetings from your fellow labourers in Lekki church of Christ where I serve. Thanks so much for this invitation for I am aware that there are better qualified ministers than myself. This exercise is needed in all the churches of Christ so that the functionality of the church might clearly manifest itself. God bless you for coming this far.

It is quite interesting to note that God is so much interested in matters of leadership. From the beginning, God chose men to lead in affairs of human endeavours. The idea of serving is inherent in us because we are called to serve. Paul writing to the Roman Christians says that every human either serve sin or righteousness – **Rom. 6:16** (KJV). Though there are reasons why some serve the way they are serving or want to serve, there are people who positively serve that God be glorified. This lesson seeks to establish the fact that servant leaders are pleasing to God hence those who serve must do so consciously, willingly with perseverance. Remember, *“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven”* – **Matt. 5:16**.

Definition of words: It is my pleasure to define two major words here viz

1. Servant - The word for “servants” is translated from the Greek word DOULOI and means bondservants or slaves. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that *“You are not your own; you were bought at a price”* (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**) to help them realize that they are slaves to someone i.e. Christ.

To the Romans he wrote *“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness”* - **Romans 6:17-18** (KJV). We all are servants at different levels.

But the term “servant” is also a term of dignity. In the Old Testament people who were chosen and used by God were called “servants of the Lord.”

- a. “Moses the servant of the LORD” (**Joshua 1:1**).
- b. “Joshua the servant of the LORD” (**Judges 2:8**).
- c. “David his servant” (**Psalms 78:70**).
- d. “David my servant” (**Psalms 89:3**).
- e. “My servants the prophets” (**Jeremiah 7:25**).
- f. “Your servants the prophets” (**Daniel 9:6**).
- g. “. . . his servants the prophets” (**Amos 3:7**).

It is, therefore, a great honour to be a servant of God, and Paul would gladly speak of himself and Timothy as “servants of Christ Jesus.” – **Phil. 1:1**. Do you feel dignified as at this time?

This attitude of servanthood Jesus demonstrated and taught. “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” - **Matthew 20:25-28** (NKJV).

2. Leader – “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader” - John Quincy Adams

- Leadership style plays a key role in leadership
- It is the hallmark of how a leader relates with people
- It demonstrates the extent to which a leader will work in collaboration or exercise power to achieve goals
- Style is considered important for several reasons
- It essentially demonstrates the extent to which a leader will go in achievement of goals
- A good leader is the person that understands his role as a leader
- Makes effective use of resources and achieve result.
- Effective leadership is a little more than achieving immediate results.
- The leader must have a long-term view of his organization and result.
- Leadership is also about creating a work environment in which people are happy and pleased to work
- A leader is head of an activity, team, group, organisation, community, nation
- A key decision maker
- A person who directs, guides or controls the activities of a group
- A person who is looked upon to solve problems in the group.
- A person who makes use of ordinary resources to achieve extraordinary results
- A person with exceptional vision and passion

- ❑ Leadership is the process by which people are directed, guided and influenced in choosing and achieving goals
- ❑ Leadership is knowing the way; going the way; and showing the way
- ❑ Leadership is who you are and what you do. (Your personality, character, attitude, values, beliefs, faith, emotions and interests) – George Tajomavwo

Peter the apostle says in **1 Pet. 5:1-3** *“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock”* (NKJV). So, a leader is one who influences behaviour of people or groups toward desired result by good example.

There is always need for leadership: God had known that there would always be need for leadership hence from the very beginning of human existence made that possible. We can study about leadership in the Patriarchal, Mosaic and the Gentile world in the pages of the scripture. In **Mark 6:31-34** Jesus recognized the need for true leadership because He observed that the Jewish people were as sheep without shepherd. He took up the leadership by teaching them and chose to lead the apostles also. God’s people today need the right kind of leadership for effective co-ordination. The church is designed to be led by the preachers through sound preaching – **1Tim. 4:16**; the elders in good administration – **Acts 20:17, 28; 14:23; 1Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9**. Deacons are another set of leaders in their capacity as they serve the church under the guidance of the elders – **Phil. 1:1** even teacher as in **Acts 13:1**.

Real servants are always very few: Using the principle of “many are called but few are chosen”, the choice of leaders had always been very few. Of all numerous disciples Jesus had, **Eph. 4:8-14** and **Lk. 6:12-15** reveal so much. We see here that Jesus chose His ministers. This principle has been there from the very beginning. One should, therefore, count himself so favoured to be so chosen amongst the people of God. Before now, have you been serving selflessly? See **Acts 6:3**.

The great lesson from our Lord Jesus Christ: It is important we look at **Matt. 20:20-28**. In verse 20, there is the mother’s involvement; her posture was respectful and honourable and as she made her request Jesus in vs. 21 asked, what do you wish? Of course, she needed an elevation of her two sons to the right and left hands in the Lord’s kingdom. As an Israelite, knowing about the kingdom was a common theme. The response of Jesus in vs 22 was, “You do not know what you ask.” The questions, “Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and

be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” showed that the two men were fully involved in the plan in making the request. Vs. 23 revealed the response of the men as they answered that they were able to drink. The Lord affirmed that they would be able to drink the cup and be baptised with the baptism and also made them to understand that the Father has hand uniquely to situations happening to individuals who are on His side. The context of cup and baptism in the verse has to do with suffering. Vs. 24 shows that the interest of the two sons of Zebedee generated displeasure among the remaining ten hence Jesus addressed them so as to carry everyone along in vs 25; the address centered on authority. He revealed that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over their subjects. On the very opposite in vs. 26, the disciples of Christ were not to emulate the Gentiles’ system of lording but to be a servant. It is interesting and comforting to understand in vs. 27 that Jesus Christ recognised positions among His disciples but taught that such must become or be prepared to be a slave or servant using Himself as such a servant in vs 28. We know from this text that someone will surely lead, however, such leading should be from a servant leader as recognised by others and not the individual jostling and hustling for such recognition.

How Jesus served: **Acts 1:1** says “*Of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.*” The uniqueness of Jesus Christ manifested itself in the spirit of serving. Typically, in **Jn. 13:2-15**, He washed the disciples’ feet; by this great example of humility and service which occurred during the Feast of Passover, the bold and clear message from our Lord is that true greatness comes through servanthood which He exemplified as a household servant. Christ Jesus had said “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” – **Matt. 20:28**.

The lesson is for us to get involved in the ministry of servanthood, therefore, to be a follower of Jesus Christ, a person must be a servant of others.

The ministry of Jesus Christ involved preaching the Gospel; performing miracles, wonders and signs; praying for all, showing compassion on others (**Matt. 9:36; 20:34; 15:32; Lk. 7:13**) and breaking barriers.

Understanding the characteristics of being a servant: Having a good knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a servant will help us to become more effective in our services. J. J. Turner in his book, “Christian Leadership Handbook” lists “Qualities of a Servant” as follows:

First, a servant recognizes that he is serving a master. The Christian is serving the Lord Jesus Christ who is the blessed and only Potentate (**1Tim. 6:15**). Thus, as a

servant himself, he cannot exalt himself above his fellow-servants. As a leader, he has a special trust to fulfil, as he works with the members of the body of Christ.

Second, he knows what it means to be a servant. It means to be in subjection to God (**Acts 27:23**). This subjection has been brought about by an exercise of choice. Thus “bondage” is not the kind of service in which the Christian is involved. The Christian is serving out of a desire to please God. He is in subjection because of love for God, the word, and the brethren.

Third, a servant seeks to have the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ is one of service to others. Paul wrote, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ... and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men*” (**Phil. 2:5,7**). Note that Jesus didn’t take on the form of a dictator. He came as a servant. This is what we must do if we are to have his mind.

Fourth, the servant of the Lord must not strive. This is stated specifically by Paul: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive” (**2 Tim. 2:24**). The word for “strive” in this text is machomai and means to fight, to quarrel, dispute, or strive. Just think of how many problems could be avoided in the church if leaders would follow this injunction. Scores!

Fifth, a servant must be gentle unto all men. This is stated in the verse noted above (2:24). The word “gentle” means equitable, fair; moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law; it expresses that considerateness that looks humanely and reasonably at the facts of a case. The church needs gentle leaders.

Sixth, a servant should be apt to teach and patient. Paul said, “*apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves*” (**2 Tim. 2:24,25**). The word “patience” carries with it the idea of endurance, and endurance that helps one become more steadfast. Every leader can use an extra measure of patience as he deals with people in the church. Remember your Master is patient with you.

Seventh, a servant must not think of himself too highly. Paul wrote to the Romans: “*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*” (**Rom. 12:3**). In the verses that follow, Paul sets forth the uniqueness and importance of every member in the church (**Rom. 12:4-21**). This lets us know that an “I’m superior” attitude has no place in the body of Christ. After all, we are all unprofitable servants (**Luke 17:10**) standing in need of God’s mercy and grace. This puts us on equal footing (leaders and followers).

Servant leadership revolves around what?

Understanding the service: Like King Solomon in **1Kings 3:5-10** who recognised the Israelites to be the people of God and God blessed him for that so must elders and other leaders recognise fellow Christians to be the people of God because Christ bought everyone by His blood, the apostles have taught us. Christianity is the faith of people, on the people, in the people, by the people because Christ Jesus came for people and left instruction for service among God's people.

One unique attitude expected of servant leaders is faithfulness. Other attitudes that go along with faithfulness are competence, willingness, submission, sacrifice and obedience.

There were faithful Jews - **2Kings 12:15; 2Chron. 34:12**

Timothy was faithful – **1Cor. 4:17**; Tychicus was faithful – **Col. 4:7**; Onesimus was faithful – **Col. 4:9**; Christian leaders are commanded to be faithful – **1Cor. 4:1-2**

We must get involved: It is always very easy for us teachers to present encouraging messages to our audiences but the doing part of it remains a challenge. For us to be on the doing part of it, we have to consciously and intentionally get involved or initiate that good work depending on where we are and what we have witnessed. If we always remember that Jesus began both to do and teach, we will get ourselves involved in many good works like showing compassion (**Jude 20-23**) etc. We must show maturity and level-headedness and be involved practically. To some of us, health is a major issue, to others, it is age, or any other barrier but we must know our challenges and apply wisdom either in supervision, co-ordination or good contributions for our leading to have the desired impact.

Who is to serve? (1) A Christian like Paul – **2Tim. 1:3**. (2) Followers of Jesus Christ – **Jn. 12:26**

Whom should we serve? God – **Matt. 4:10; 1Thess. 1:9; Heb. 12:28**. Christ Jesus – **Col. 3:24**. Fellow Christians – **Gal. 5:13**

Serving at the church level: This affects our worship – **Jn. 4:24; Acts 2:42** therefore preparation and effective performance is highly needed. We must know how to behave ourselves in the house of God – **1Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:12-13; 12:15-17**. Initiating good programs related to evangelism and edification. Handling church funds is extremely important, choosing an emissary to represent the church is also important, conduct of church meetings and managing time for maximum benefit, being available and active in participation, giving due concerns to situations that

affect brethren, encouraging personnel's with appreciation and promoting unions among those who are prepared.

How should we serve? In newness of spirit – **Rom 7:6**. In spirit and in truth – Jn. 4:24. With all humility – **Acts 20:19**

How we should not serve: Grudgingly or grumbling, of necessity, with pains and sorrows, not with eye-service – **James 5:9; 1Pet. 4:9; 2Cor. 9:7; Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22**.

What we must not serve? Sin – Rom. Rom. 6:6; our belly – **Rom. 16:18**.

## Conclusion

There is nothing that gives one joy and satisfaction than when you render a service it goes a long way to uplift the spirit of others. While some are campaigning with their mouths for recognition as if they are politicians, others show by their services like the example in **1 Cor. 16:15-18**.

The kingdom of God is designed to produce servants and each of us should be happy to be counted among.

J. J. Turner sums up this way “If you want to be a great leader as God deems greatness, you must be a servant, a servant who has denied himself and is following his Lord in service to others (**Matt. 16:24**). The role of a servant is not an easy one. The servant spirit is an attribute that must be worked on and prayed about daily. In every situation ask yourself: How can I better serve? What may I do for this person? Am I really acting like a servant?”

Dear elders and ministers, the churches of Christ need working men. Some of us have the resources, let us employ it. Some know the way, let us show it. Some have the knowledge, let us teach it. It is good to serve so that at the end, we rest from our labours and our works will follow us.

One great way to promote serving for God's glory is to get qualified men to serve in different capacities according to God's will and to recognize them for their work's sake. We must be sincere and honest in any way we are being used and we must not promote abuse, arrogance and pride.

God bless us as we serve in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ – Amen