

Servant Leadership: An Option For Businesses, A Mandate For Churches Series

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Scripture: Matthew 20:25-28, Genesis 1:28, Deuteronomy 17:14-20, 1 Samuel 8:11-18, John 13:1-17

Denomination: Evangelical/Non-Denominational

Summary: The Business world is realising the value of Servant Leadership and accepting that is is profitable. Hoe about Churches?

Servant Leadership: An Option for Businesses, a Mandate for Churches

"Everything rises and falls on Leadership" says Leadership Guru John Maxwell. That is why Businesses invest heavily on Leadership development activities. The Business world has come to realise the benefit of adopting Servant Leadership as their overarching leadership philosophy and are reaping benefits of having the best of Results and Relationships. They become organisations that are growing in revenue, are profitable , thereby making shareholders happy. At the same time these organisations are loved by the employees of the organisation. Business world has proven that Servant Leadership gives the best of both worlds.

How about us Christians? How about our churches?

In a way, Genesis 1:28 could be treated as the very first definition of the Leadership. If you read Genesis 1:28, you realize that the command is about subduing and have dominion over all living things on earth. This definition sounds incorrect and inappropriate in the current context. So did God make a mistake? We know the answer. This question might sound rhetorical. But to appreciate this command we must look at the timeline when this definition was given. You will quickly realise that this command was give before the fall. You see, before the fall, the understanding of "subdue and have dominion over" would have been very different from what we understand in the fallen world. So let us see what happened after the fall. After the fall, God understood the tendency of human beings to misuse the freedom and wisdom given by him and that is why the laws were given. Along with several laws that were given to mankind post-fall, there is a law given about leaders too. The first post-fall definition of leadership is seen in Deuteronomy 17: 14-20. Interestingly this definition is more about what the leader should not do, who the leader should not be etc. This was in a way the prediction of how the fallen leaders will misuse the "Subdue and have dominion over" command given in Genesis 1:28. And we see this further explained and highlighted in 1 Samuel Chapter 8, where the Israelites come and demand that they be given a King. The Lord asks Samuel to warn the people about what the king will do. The 8 verses from 1 Samuel 8:11-18 read like a contemporary leadership picture. Samuel effectively tells them that once they have a king , the king is going to take their money, their land, their livestock, their sons and daughters and use it for his own pleasure. But the people were adamant and insisted on having a King.

So Gods Leadership sketch that started with "What to do" command in Genesis 1:28 soon became, after the fall "What not to do". and then came the prediction and warning about the misuse of power that mankind is likely to experience. And History shows that Kings after Kings fitted beautifully into this pattern of misuse of power. While Saul misused the power to disobey, David , the great man after God's

own heart, misused power to get a wife (as if he didn't have enough). Solomon misused power to please his wives and concubines. And the classic example is that of Rehoboam, who had a clear choice in front of him. 1 Kings 12:7 gives him the advice that "If you chose to serve these people today, they will be your servants forever". But He chooses to use the "Power" that he had inherited and "subdue" the people. You will see this trend in the long line of rulers in the Bible.

If we look at God's leadership sketch that we saw earlier, we will know that Jesus reversed the whole misuse of power and turned it upside down, when he gave the Not-so-with-you command in Mathew 20: 25-28. And then Jesus sealed it with the feet washing incident in John 13:1-17 and gave a new command to serve. It is interesting to note that there is only one place in the bible where Jesus explicitly says that he did something to set an example for others, and it is in John 13:13-17. John 13:13-17 (NKJV) 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. I have searched almost 24 different translations of the Bible to see if John 13:17 is translated differently. No. All of them say, blessed are you if you do accordingly. Focus being on action here.

For the world, Servant Leadership is one of the alternative leadership philosophies for the new normal. For us Christians, there is no other alternative. Jesus says not-so-with-you for any other way of leading, or living, and he asks us to follow his example of taking the basin, and washing the feet of his followers including the one He knew was going to betray Him soon.

Victor Hugo said, "There is nothing as powerful as an Idea whose time has come." The business world is realizing that the time for Servant Leadership has come. How about us in the Church?

Can we learn to Live , Love and Lead like Jesus in the New Normal?