

**M**ark 10:42-45 gives us insight into the meaning of what our Lord meant by servant leadership. “... *Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great one’s exercise authority over them. “Yet it shall not be so among you; **but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”***”

As we read, Christ shared that servant leadership is a choice. It begins by having an attitude that supports the idea of knowing a person can choose to place himself or herself under a leader. The leader can force no one. Those within a leader’s sphere of influence must decide if they will submit to the leader’s style...or elect not to submit.

In modeling servant leadership, I focus on six areas vital to the Christian leader:

*ambition:*       **Glorifying the Living God**  
*role:*           **To do everything possible for our people to succeed**  
*system:*       **Character first – Methods next**  
*philosophy:*   **Voice & Touch**  
*method:*       **Responsible leaders for responsible people**  
*attitude:*      **Thinking Christianly**

**Ambition:   Glorifying the Living God**

*To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition. (I Timothy 3:1)*

*Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. (Jeremiah 45:5)*

When our ambition is to be effective in the service of our Lord, we can keep both of these verses in mind and hold them in balance. Jesus taught ambition that centers on the self is wrong. However He also taught that ambition when centered on the glory of God and welfare of the body of Christ is a mighty force for good.

True leadership, true managing of one’s human resources, is found in giving yourself in service to your people, not in coaxing, inducing, or commanding them to follow you.

**Role:           To do everything possible for our people to succeed**

This becomes the benchmark and “*focal thought*” for a servant leader desiring to accomplish anything through the people in their organization. Whenever in doubt as to whether they are doing enough, listening well, or assisting another, a leader must ask first if they are fulfilling their role as a leader.

Truly doing *everything possible for one’s people to succeed* is demonstrated through a servant’s heart and good character and channeled through effective methods, procedures and systems. By so doing, a leader can maximize capability and the growth of his people’s talents and abilities. Are you unsure if this is occurring in your organization? Ask your people!

To understand the role of a leader, we must understand the definition of leadership. Chuck Swindoll, Chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, shares that leadership is *“inspiring influence with the ability to get along well with others.”* While desiring to serve in a manner that inspires and changes the lives of those he leads, a leader continues to be both respected and sought out by the people he directly serves.

### **System: Character first – Methods next**

Good character or Effective methods? One without the other is ineffective in the development and management of people within *any* organization. The church has traditionally emphasized exhaustively the topic of character while for-profit organizations have continued to emphasize the need for sound methods and systems. Neither group has shown their focus to be effective in leading and managing people. Either character or methods by itself will fail.

Character is the foundation for effective leadership within any organization. Character and leadership must be developed and found within leaders *first* if good methods and procedures are to follow. Attributes of sound character such as integrity, honesty, empathy, awareness, stewardship loving discipline, justice, courage and service, when displayed, lay a foundation of trust between a leader and their followers. Without trust, the character of a leader is on sandy ground.

However, character *without* sound methods also brings about growing distrust and low motivation in those we lead. Too often we see an organization with methods that are written by “those that know the job.” On paper, methods may look perfect, yet without a leader that is grounded in a character of doing the right thing at the right time, the methods ultimately fail. The converse, a display of character without good methods, fails as well. An effective leader needs good character *first*, synergized with sound methods and procedures to develop a growing team!

### **Philosophy: Voice & Touch**

Always at the heart of a leader is his Voice & Touch. Voice & touch is speaking to a person as if you were that person and wearing their “glasses.” *What would you say to them to make sure they would “get it?”*

Voice & touch is becoming all things to all people; communicating and meeting people in a place of understanding *they* understand. The content or material can be the same, yet the communication process should be different for different people. Too often we assume what we shared was understood by everyone. *Why? Because I understood it myself.* This assumption is seldom correct.

Understanding the importance of how we talk with people becomes vital for Voice & Touch to be present. Like Jesus Christ, as part of the process we need to speak to *all people*, at *all times* with....

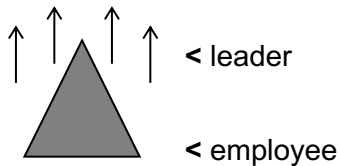
- **Dignity** being sensitive so as not to hurt the person's overall being...acting humanely.
- **Respect** treating others as I would want to be treated, with value.
- **Compassion** giving the person the extra chance, one last time...remembering he or she may still “get it.”
- **Integrity** doing what you say you will do every time...your word being your bond.

Voice & Touch becomes the key in the communication process with our employees, every time.

## Method: Responsible leaders for responsible employees

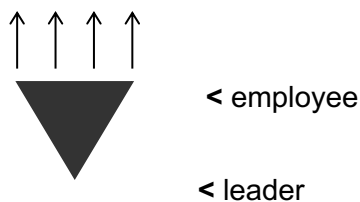
There is a wise saying; ***If you want RESPONSIBLE people, you must be RESPONSIBLE yourself.*** This becomes leadership by example. Note there are 2 parts to responsible leadership:

- Facilitating the Vision & Direction
- Implementing the Vision & Direction



### Facilitating the Vision

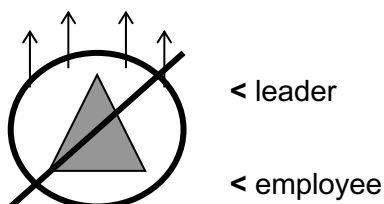
***Facilitating the Vision and Direction*** places the leader at the top of a “right-side up” pyramid, sharing and facilitating all aspects of the organization’s vision to all their people. Why? Because people continually cry out for both *clarity and focus* in their jobs and the organizations in which they work. Effective facilitation of the organization’s methods and systems will give the people the direction they desire. This could include: knowing the mission and values, working with accurate job descriptions clearly communicating the organization’s job practices and policies. As a leader facilitates the many aspects of the organization’s vision, it is hoped that the people will then implement what has been shown.



### Implementing the Vision (good)

***Implementing the Vision and Direction*** places the people in an organization at the top of an upside-down pyramid. As shown by the arrows, it is now the employees who are implementing the vision of the organization. As the vision is carried out, it now becomes the role of the leader to serve and assist the people in carrying out their responsibilities within the organization.

Note what happens when you have a leader **telling the people** how to implement the vision and direction (“do this...do that”). The triangle places the leader once again on the top, this time **pulling the people along**. This becomes a demonstration of **pride, ego and ambition** on the part of the manager.



### Implementing the Vision (not good)

When you give proper **vision** through facilitation and **implement the vision** through your people, I believe you have no choice but to become both a **responsible leader** and a **servant leader**.

## **Attitude: Thinking Christianly**

Communication is so much more than simply *giving out information*. **Attitude is vital**. Attitude is the one thing that anyone can impact without needing to know anything else. *Thinking Christianly*, treats our *Christianity* as an active-tense verb, allowing the leader to move forward with the attitude of asking: “*What would Jesus Christ do in my situation?*” There is no better attitude for a leader.

## **A Few Conclusions...**

A synergism of the six areas of servant leadership should become the model for all interaction with your people at work. To be successful in God’s eyes, and the world’s as well, a leader needs to first embrace who they serve, the employees, and then become their servant...*by doing everything possible for them to succeed*. Until this takes place in the heart, leaders will be guided solely by their personal or corporate ambition.

Ultimately, we as leaders will stand before our Lord as He asks; “*What have you done for my people?*” As such, we will be held responsible for the maximum growth, welfare and effectiveness of those people, both spiritually and corporately.

***Are we not stewards of those God has called us to lead?***

Ronald F Smedley  
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