COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 50

The Way *of the* Servant Leader

STUDY GUIDE 2 OF 5:

Leadership Through Service

An overview of leading by serving and strengthening others.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

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In the previous Study Guide, we established that servanthood is the foundation of Christian leadership. Every believer is called to serve, and greater responsibility never removes that calling. The servant does not graduate beyond servanthood when leadership begins.

We now move from the foundation of servanthood to the responsibility of leadership. Biblical leadership is not primarily about position, recognition or authority over others. It is about using the responsibility entrusted to us for the good of those we serve.

Jesus Christ made this distinction clear when He contrasted the way worldly rulers exercise authority with the way His disciples were to live.

Jesus said in **Luke 22:26**:

> *"But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."*

Jesus did not deny that some people would carry greater responsibility. He spoke of *"he that is chief,"* but He also established how that responsibility must be exercised: *"as he that doth serve."* This principle governs everything we will consider in this Study Guide.

Leadership in the Church must never become a means of controlling people, building personal influence or elevating one person above others. Jesus Christ remains the Head of the Church, and those entrusted with responsibility serve under His authority.

The servant leader therefore does not ask, How can I make people follow me? The greater question is, How can the responsibility God has entrusted to me be used to strengthen, protect, encourage and build others?

Christian leadership is also not produced by copying Jesus Christ from the outside. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His servant life must govern the way responsibility is exercised. His humility, love and concern for people provide the inward source from which genuine servant leadership flows.

In this Study Guide, we will consider how leadership grows from servanthood, why biblical leadership serves rather than controls, how leaders guide through example, the proper place of offices and responsibilities, what it means to belong fully to Christ, and how discipleship prepares people to serve and lead.

The controlling truth is simple and must remain before us throughout the Study Guide: Leadership in the Kingdom of God is responsibility exercised through service.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that leadership is responsibility exercised through service?

Personal Reflection

Where have you treated leadership mainly as making decisions rather than caring for the people affected by them?

Action Step

Choose a responsibility you carry, or might carry, and identify whom it serves. Change one decision or practice to give greater attention to their needs.

INTRODUCTION: FROM SERVANTHOOD TO LEADERSHIP

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Servanthood is the foundation of Christian leadership, but Scripture also shows that some believers are entrusted with responsibility for others. The important question is therefore not whether leadership exists, but how that leadership should be exercised.

Jesus Christ gave a clear answer. Leadership among His people must not follow the pattern of domination, self-exaltation or control commonly seen in the world.

Luke recorded the words of Jesus in **Luke 22:25-27**:

> *"And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."*

The words *"But ye shall not be so"* establish an important distinction. Jesus did not say that responsibility would disappear among His people. He spoke of *"he that is chief,"* but taught that the person entrusted with responsibility must remain one *"that doth serve."*

Biblical leadership is therefore not a position from which a person controls others. It is responsibility exercised through service.

Peter later applied the same principle to those caring for the Church.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 5:2-3**:

> *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."*

Peter did not reject oversight. He explained how it must operate. Those entrusted with responsibility were not to become *"lords over God's heritage,"* but were to care for the flock and provide a faithful example.

Leadership must therefore always remain under the authority of Jesus Christ. No leader owns the people of God because Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and those who lead are servants entrusted with responsibility for the good of His people.

That responsibility should strengthen, protect, encourage and help others grow. It should point people towards Jesus Christ rather than making them dependent upon the leader.

Christian leadership is also not an attempt to reproduce Jesus Christ through outward imitation. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His servant life must govern the way responsibility is exercised. His life within provides the humility, love and concern for others that servant leadership requires.

In this Study Guide, we will examine how leadership grows from servanthood, why biblical leaders serve rather than control, how leadership is exercised through example, why offices are functions of service, what it means to belong fully to Christ, and how discipleship prepares believers for greater responsibility.

The principle that will govern everything that follows is clear: Biblical leadership is responsibility exercised for the good of others under the authority of Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that biblical leadership serves others under Christ's authority?

Personal Reflection

When a task is entrusted to you, whose wishes tend to govern it: your own, those of others or Christ's Word? Explain.

Action Step

Before your next important decision, identify what the Bible teaches and how your choice can serve others under Christ's authority.

LEADERSHIP FLOWS FROM SERVANTHOOD

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Leadership in the Kingdom of God does not begin with position. It begins with service. Before a person is entrusted with responsibility for others, there should already be evidence of humility, faithfulness and a willingness to serve without demanding recognition.

Jesus made this principle clear when He spoke to His disciples about greatness.

Luke recorded the words of Jesus in **Luke 22:26**:

> *"But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."*

The order is important. Jesus did not teach that someone becomes a servant after becoming a leader. He taught that the one entrusted with responsibility must remain one *"that doth serve."*

Leadership should therefore grow from a life in which servanthood is already established. Greater responsibility does not create the servant foundation because that foundation should already be present.

Faithfulness Precedes Greater Responsibility

Scripture repeatedly connects greater responsibility with faithfulness in what has already been entrusted.

Jesus said in **Matthew 25:21**:

> *"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."*

The servant was first faithful *"over a few things."* Greater responsibility followed proven faithfulness.

This does not mean that leadership is something a person earns through ambition or effort. It means that character is revealed in the way present responsibilities are handled.

A person who serves faithfully when the work is unnoticed is being tested in an important way. The question is not simply whether they are capable of doing more, but whether they can be trusted to carry greater responsibility without allowing position to replace servanthood.

Faithfulness in small things reveals whether responsibility can be carried with the right spirit. The way we serve before receiving greater responsibility can reveal much about how we will carry that responsibility later.

Servanthood Prepares the Heart

Leadership brings pressure, responsibility and the need to care for others. Without a servant heart, these responsibilities can easily become centred upon self.

Servanthood teaches a person to notice other people rather than continually protecting personal interests.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:3-4**:

> *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."*

These qualities are essential in anyone entrusted with leadership. A leader who continually asks, How does this affect me? will struggle to care properly for others.

Servanthood teaches us to ask different questions:

- What do these people need?
- How can I strengthen them?
- How can I help them grow?
- What responsibility has God placed before me for their good?

Leadership becomes dangerous when responsibility is separated from this servant foundation. The purpose of responsibility must remain the good of those who have been entrusted to our care.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that faithful service prepares the heart for greater responsibility?

Personal Reflection

What unnoticed responsibility have you avoided while hoping for a more important opportunity? What does this show about your motives?

Action Step

Return to one neglected, ordinary duty. Carry it out faithfully and consider how service prepares the heart for greater responsibility.

Leadership Must Be by Example

Peter taught that those entrusted with oversight must not dominate the people of God.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 5:2-3**:

> *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."*

Peter speaks of genuine oversight, but he places clear limits upon the way it is exercised. The leader is not to become a lord over God's people, but is to become an example to the flock.

This is important because authority without example quickly becomes hollow. A person may tell others what to do, but if their own life contradicts what they teach, their leadership loses credibility.

Servant leadership carries responsibility through example as well as instruction. The life of the leader should support the truth being taught.

Joseph: Faithful Before Elevation

Joseph provides a powerful example of leadership growing from service. Before he carried responsibility over Egypt, he served faithfully in Potiphar's house.

Moses wrote in **Genesis 39:4**:

> *"And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand."*

Joseph did not begin as overseer because he served first. Later, even after being falsely accused and imprisoned, he continued to demonstrate faithfulness. His circumstances changed, but his willingness to serve did not.

When greater responsibility eventually came, Joseph had already learned faithfulness in places where there was little honour and no public recognition. God can use hidden service to prepare a person for visible responsibility.

Joseph's example reminds us that preparation for leadership may be taking place long before a person receives a recognised position. Faithfulness in the present responsibility matters.

Moses: Leadership Through Meekness

Moses carried enormous responsibility, yet Scripture emphasises his meekness.

Moses wrote in **Numbers 12:3**:

> *"(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)"*

Moses led a nation, but his leadership was not meant to be characterised by self-exaltation. He repeatedly carried the burdens of the people, interceded for them and depended upon God.

His example shows that strong leadership and humility are not opposites. A servant leader may need to make difficult decisions, give direction or correct what is wrong, but humility does not mean refusing responsibility.

Humility means carrying responsibility without making self the centre. The responsibility is real, but it is exercised for the good of others and under the authority of God.

Paul: Serving for Jesus' Sake

Paul also understood leadership as service.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:5**:

> *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."*

Paul carried apostolic responsibility, but his message was not himself. He preached *"Christ Jesus the Lord"* and described himself as *"your servants for Jesus' sake."*

This establishes the proper relationship between leadership and Jesus Christ. The leader must never become the centre because Jesus Christ remains the Lord, and leadership exists to serve His purpose and His people.

The responsibility may belong to the servant, but the people belong to Jesus Christ. Leadership must therefore continually direct attention towards Him rather than towards the person carrying the responsibility.

David: Prepared in the Sheepfold

David also illustrates how service can precede leadership.

The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 78:70-72**:

> *"He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."*

David's preparation did not begin on a throne because it began among sheep. There he learned responsibility, protection and care. Later, those same principles became part of his responsibility towards God's people.

The connection is significant. The one who had cared for sheep was later called to *"feed Jacob his people."* The setting changed and the responsibility increased, but the principle of caring for what had been entrusted to him remained.

Leadership Must Never Outgrow Service

Joseph, Moses, Paul and David carried very different responsibilities, but the same principle appears in each life. Service came before leadership or remained within it.

This is the foundation biblical leadership must preserve. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His servant life must continue to govern us when greater responsibility is received.

Leadership should never become an opportunity for pride, control or personal elevation. Responsibility may increase, but servanthood must remain.

The leader who ceases to serve has forgotten the foundation upon which biblical leadership stands.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that a leader must continue serving after receiving responsibility?

Personal Reflection

Have you allowed greater responsibility to reduce your willingness to do practical work? Describe where this has happened or could happen.

Action Step

Identify a useful task you might now leave to others because of your role. Serve appropriately alongside them without relying on your position.

SERVING, NOT CONTROLLING

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Leadership carries real responsibility, but Scripture places clear boundaries around the way that responsibility is exercised. Biblical leadership is never permission to dominate people, manipulate them or make them dependent upon a human leader.

Jesus Christ directly contrasted worldly leadership with leadership among His people.

Matthew recorded the words of Jesus in **Matthew 20:25-28**:

> *"But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

The words *"But it shall not be so among you"* establish a clear distinction. Jesus was not removing all responsibility or authority from His people. He was correcting the way authority was to be understood and exercised.

Worldly leadership can become centred upon power, status and control. Biblical leadership must remain centred upon service.

Authority Is Not Ownership

A person entrusted with responsibility in the Church does not become the owner of the people they serve. The people belong to Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 5:2-3**:

> *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."*

Notice Peter's words, *"God's heritage."* The flock does not belong to the leader because it belongs to God.

This is important because leadership becomes dangerous when a person begins to act as though others belong to them, must depend upon them or must submit to their personal control. Biblical leadership recognises that every believer belongs first to Jesus Christ.

The leader therefore serves under His authority. Responsibility may be entrusted to a person, but ownership remains with God.

Leadership Builds Rather Than Suppresses

The purpose of ministry is to strengthen the body of Christ.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:11-12**:

> *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"*

The word *"edifying"* carries the thought of building up. This gives us an important test of leadership.

We should ask:

- Does the leadership strengthen people spiritually?
- Does it help them understand the Word of God?
- Does it encourage them to serve faithfully?
- Does it help them grow in maturity?
- Does it direct them towards Jesus Christ?

Leadership that continually weakens people, frightens them, silences them or makes them dependent upon human approval is moving away from the purpose Scripture gives to ministry.

Biblical leadership builds people rather than using people to build the leader. Responsibility exists for the strengthening of the body, not the elevation of the person carrying it.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that authority should build people rather than control them?

Personal Reflection

When people disagree with your decisions, do you seek to strengthen them or to protect your control? What needs to change?

Action Step

Choose one situation where you could listen more carefully and allow another person to contribute. Practise that change rather than insisting on control.

Servant Leadership Is Not Weak Leadership

Serving rather than controlling does not mean that leaders refuse to make decisions, correct error or give direction. Leadership involves responsibility, and responsibility sometimes requires difficult action.

Paul wrote in **Titus 1:9**:

> *"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."*

A servant leader may need to exhort, correct or protect people from false teaching and harmful conduct. The difference is found in the purpose and spirit with which that responsibility is exercised.

Correction should seek restoration rather than humiliation. Direction should seek the good of the people rather than the comfort of the leader, while authority should protect rather than oppress.

Strong leadership and servant leadership are therefore not opposites. A leader can be firm while remaining humble and decisive while remaining loving.

People Must Be Directed Towards Christ

One of the greatest dangers of controlling leadership is that people can become more dependent upon a human leader than upon Jesus Christ.

Paul rejected this kind of personal elevation.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:5**:

> *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."*

Paul clearly established who was Lord. It was Christ Jesus the Lord, while Paul's place was that of a servant.

A faithful leader therefore does not attempt to become the spiritual centre of another person's life. Teaching, counsel and guidance should help people know Jesus Christ and understand His Word more clearly.

The leader serves best when people become more firmly established in Christ rather than increasingly dependent upon the leader. The purpose is not to gather people around a personality, but to direct them towards Jesus Christ.

Nehemiah Built With the People

Nehemiah provides an important example of leadership that mobilised people rather than controlling them. When he saw the condition of Jerusalem, he did not simply issue commands from a distance.

Nehemiah recorded in **Nehemiah 2:17-18**:

> *"Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."*

Notice the language, *"Let us build."* Nehemiah did not separate himself from the work because he brought the people into the responsibility and helped them recognise what could be accomplished together.

Their response was, *"Let us rise up and build."* The people became participants in the work rather than spectators waiting for one leader to do everything.

This is a valuable picture of servant leadership. A leader does not need to do everything personally, but should help others recognise their place and participate faithfully in the work before them.

Paul and Barnabas Strengthened Others

Paul and Barnabas also demonstrated leadership that strengthened believers.

Luke wrote in **Acts 14:21-23**:

> *"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."*

Their work included teaching, exhorting and establishing leadership, but notice where the believers were finally commended: *"They commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."*

Paul and Barnabas did not build a system in which believers could function only through their personal presence. They strengthened them and commended them to the Lord.

That is an important principle of servant leadership. The goal is not to make people permanently dependent upon the person who teaches or leads them, but to establish them more firmly in Jesus Christ.

Leadership Should Release Others to Serve

Controlling leadership tends to gather responsibility into the hands of a few people. Servant leadership recognises that the body of Christ contains many members and that those members need opportunities to serve.

A leader should therefore not feel threatened when others grow, develop or carry responsibility. The goal is not to remain indispensable because the goal is to strengthen the body.

A faithful leader should rejoice when another believer becomes capable of teaching, serving, organising, encouraging or carrying greater responsibility. The growth of another believer is not a threat to leadership because it is part of the purpose of leadership.

Leadership succeeds when people are strengthened in Jesus Christ and become faithful servants themselves. The leader serves the body by helping others become useful in the work God has placed before them.

Christ Remains the Head

The final safeguard against controlling leadership is simple: Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. No pastor, teacher, elder, apostle or other leader can take His place.

Those entrusted with responsibility serve beneath His authority and for the good of His people. Leadership must therefore never become domination, ownership or personal empire-building.

Biblical leadership serves, strengthens, protects and builds others while continually directing them towards Jesus Christ. The leader carries responsibility, but Christ remains Lord.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that leaders strengthen others while Christ remains Head?

Personal Reflection

Have you ever relied too much on a leader, or encouraged others to rely too much on you? How does Christ's headship correct this?

Action Step

Help someone consider what God's Word says instead of asking them simply to accept your opinion. Keep Jesus Christ, not yourself, at the centre.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE, NOT POSITION

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A recognised function may identify a responsibility, but Scripture does not establish religious titles of honour for those who serve. Biblical leadership gains credibility when the life of the person carrying responsibility agrees with the truth they teach.

Paul understood this principle when he wrote to the Corinthians.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 11:1**:

> *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."*

Paul was not asking believers to make him the centre of their faith. His words contain an important qualification: *"even as I also am of Christ."* His example had value only as his life remained governed by Jesus Christ.

This establishes an important principle of servant leadership. The leader must never take the place of Christ. A faithful example should continually direct people towards Him.

Example Gives Weight to Instruction

Paul gave similar instruction to Timothy, a younger man carrying considerable responsibility among believers.

Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 4:12**:

> *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."*

Timothy's leadership was not to depend upon age, status or title. His life was to demonstrate the truth he taught.

Paul identified several areas in which Timothy should be an example:

- Word: The way he spoke;
- Conversation: The manner of his life;
- Charity: The love expressed towards others;
- Spirit: The attitude from which he lived and served;
- Faith: His confidence and faithfulness towards God;
- Purity: The integrity of his conduct.

A leader's words become much more difficult for others to receive when those words are contradicted by the leader's own conduct. Leadership by example means that what we teach and how we live should agree.

Integrity Makes Leadership Trustworthy

Paul also instructed Titus concerning the importance of personal example.

Paul wrote in **Titus 2:7-8**:

> *"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."*

Integrity means that our public teaching and private conduct do not belong to two different lives. A servant leader cannot expect honesty from others while practising dishonesty, teach humility while continually seeking recognition or teach faithfulness while repeatedly neglecting responsibilities personally entrusted to them.

This does not mean that leaders are expected to be without human weakness or never make mistakes. It means that they must be sincere, accountable and willing to correct what is wrong.

When failure occurs, integrity does not pretend that nothing happened. Integrity is willing to acknowledge wrong, receive correction and walk according to truth.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that a leader's conduct must agree with the truth they teach?

Personal Reflection

Is there a difference between what you tell others to do and what you practise yourself? Identify a specific area.

Action Step

Choose one gap between your words and conduct. Take an honest corrective step and, where appropriate, acknowledge the inconsistency to those affected.

Joshua: His Own Choice Was Clear

Joshua carried responsibility for the people of Israel, but he also made his own commitment to God unmistakably clear.

Joshua said in **Joshua 24:15**:

> *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

Joshua called the people to make a choice, but he did not ask them to make a commitment that he himself refused to make. He could say plainly, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

Leadership by example begins with personal faithfulness. Before asking others to obey God, the leader must be willing to obey Him.

Nehemiah: Working With the People

Nehemiah gives us another practical example. The rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall was not accomplished by Nehemiah standing at a distance while others carried the burden.

Nehemiah wrote in **Nehemiah 4:6**:

> *"So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."*

Notice the words *"So built we."* Nehemiah identified himself with the work, and his leadership helped unite and strengthen the people rather than separating him from them.

This does not mean that every leader must personally perform every task. Leadership includes organising responsibilities and allowing others to serve according to their place. However, leaders should never develop the attitude that practical service has become beneath them.

Responsibility changes the work we may need to perform, but it must never produce an attitude of superiority.

Paul: His Life Agreed With His Message

Paul reminded the elders at Ephesus that they had personally observed the manner of his ministry.

Luke recorded Paul's words in **Acts 20:18-19**:

> *"And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:"*

Paul could refer to the way he had lived *"at all seasons."* His service was not limited to public teaching because the elders had seen his humility, tears, difficulties and continued faithfulness.

His life gave credibility to his instruction. A faithful leader does not need to create an image of spirituality for others to see because, over time, ordinary conduct reveals character.

The test of example is therefore not how a person appears during a public moment. It is whether the same servant character remains visible through the ordinary circumstances of life and ministry.

Jesus Demonstrated What He Taught

Jesus Himself demonstrated the principle of leadership through service.

After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus said in **John 13:14-15**:

> *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."*

Jesus used the outward action to demonstrate humble service. He did not ask His disciples to consider any genuine act of service beneath them.

These verses are not establishing literal feet washing as a continuing New Covenant ordinance. The outward action demonstrated the servant principle Jesus wanted His disciples to understand and live.

The born-again believer does not reproduce that servant life by attempting to copy Jesus from the outside. Jesus Christ dwells within His people, and His life within must govern the way they speak, serve and carry responsibility.

An Example Should Point People to Jesus Christ

There is always a danger that people begin looking too strongly towards a human leader. Paul guarded against this by making Christ the qualification for following his example: *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."*

The leader's example is never the final standard because Jesus Christ remains the standard, the Head and the source of spiritual life. A servant leader should therefore be able to say through both teaching and conduct, Do not stop with me. Look to Jesus Christ.

Leadership by example is not about building admiration for the leader. It is about living faithfully so that the responsibility entrusted to us helps others see more clearly the truth we teach.

Functions may carry genuine responsibility, but responsibility cannot replace character. A servant leader does not depend upon position to give weight to their life. Their words and

conduct agree because the life of Jesus Christ within governs both what they teach and how they live.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that an example should direct people to Jesus rather than to the leader?

Personal Reflection

Are you more concerned that people admire your example or that they learn to depend upon Jesus Christ? Explain.

Action Step

In one interaction, serve or guide someone in a way that directs them to Christ and His Word rather than towards personal admiration.

OFFICES ARE FUNCTIONS OF SERVICE, NOT TITLES OF HONOUR

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The New Testament recognises different offices and responsibilities within the Church. Some believers are entrusted to teach, shepherd, oversee, evangelise or carry other responsibilities.

These functions are important, but they are functions of service, not religious titles to be placed before a person's name. Jesus Christ remains the Head of the Church, and every office exists beneath His authority and for the service of His people.

Jesus addressed the religious use of titles directly.

Matthew recorded the words of Jesus in **Matthew 23:8-10**:

> *"But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ."*

Jesus' words are direct. He said *"be not ye called Rabbi," "call no man your father,"* and *"Neither be ye called masters."* He then gave the reason: *"for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."*

This establishes an important principle for leadership in the Church. Different believers may carry different responsibilities, but those responsibilities do not create a religious class that is spiritually elevated above the rest of the body.

There is one Master, Jesus Christ, and His people are brethren.

Offices Describe Functions of Service

Paul identified several important ministries within the Church.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:11-12**:

> *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"*

These words describe responsibilities and functions within the body. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers all serve, and the purpose of these ministries is clearly stated: *"for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."*

The office does not exist to exalt the person carrying it. It exists to strengthen the body.

The word translated *"ministry"* comes from the Greek word DIAKONIA, which carries the thought of service or ministry. It is closely related to DIAKONOS, meaning one who serves or ministers.

This helps us understand the biblical meaning of ministry. An office is a function of service, not a title of religious honour.

Paul Called Himself a Servant

Paul carried apostolic responsibility, but notice how he described himself.

Paul wrote in **Romans 1:1**:

> *"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,"*

Paul did not introduce himself as though Apostle were a religious title placed before his name. He was Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, who had been *"called to be an apostle."*

The distinction is important. His apostleship described the responsibility to which he had been called, while his fundamental position remained that of *"a servant of Jesus Christ."*

The same principle applies to every other office. A person may perform the work of a pastor, teach, or fulfil an evangelistic ministry. These words describe functions of service; they are not religious titles of honour to be placed before a person's name. The function identifies the work. It does not elevate the worker above the brethren.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that church offices describe work of service, not ranks of honour?

Personal Reflection

Have you treated a ministry function as an honour attached to a person instead of work performed for others? Explain.

Action Step

When speaking about a minister this week, describe the service they provide rather than elevating their position. Consider how this changes your language.

All Ye Are Brethren

Jesus gave the reason for forbidding religious titles of honour when He said, *"all ye are brethren."* This does not mean that every believer carries the same responsibility because Scripture clearly recognises elders, bishops, deacons, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

The distinction is one of function and responsibility, not spiritual rank. A person may carry significant responsibility while remaining a brother or sister among God's people.

Responsibility does not create a higher spiritual class. Different functions exist within the one body, but every believer remains under the authority of the same Head, Jesus Christ.

The Danger of Religious Hierarchy

Religious titles can contribute to a system in which leaders become separated from ordinary believers and are treated as a superior spiritual class. That is contrary to the principle Jesus established.

The book of Revelation also records Christ's rejection of the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

John recorded in **Revelation 2:6**:

> *"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."*

The Greek word translated *"Nicolaitans"* is NIKOLAITĒS, referring to a Nicolaitan or follower of Nicolaus. The name NIKOLAOS is formed from two Greek elements:

- NIKĒ: Victory or conquest;
- LAOS: People.

There is also the related Greek verb NIKAŌ, meaning to conquer, overcome, prevail or gain victory. For this reason, the name has been understood conceptually as carrying the thought of conquering the people or ruling over the people.

COGMA understands this as significant in the light of Jesus' direct teaching concerning leadership among His people. He expressly rejected the worldly pattern in which rulers exercise dominion over others.

Jesus said in **Matthew 20:25-26**:

> *"But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;"*

The principle is clear. Leadership in the Church must never become a system in which a religious class conquers, dominates or rules over the people of God. Jesus established the opposite principle when He said, *"But it shall not be so among you."*

The New Testament recognises genuine oversight and responsibility, but it does not establish a ruling spiritual class above the brethren. Those entrusted with responsibility remain servants within the body, while Jesus Christ alone remains the Master and Head.

Peter Remained a Fellow Elder

Peter provides an important example of this principle.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 5:1-3**:

> *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."*

Peter did not present himself as the supreme ruler of the other elders. He said that he was *"also an elder."* At the same time, he recognised genuine oversight because the elders were to *"feed the flock of God"* and take responsibility for its care.

However, they were specifically forbidden from becoming *"lords over God's heritage."* This gives us the correct balance: there is genuine responsibility and oversight, but there must not be religious superiority or domination.

The office identifies a responsibility to serve. It does not make the person carrying it a master over the brethren.

Christ Alone Must Have the Preeminence

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:18**:

> *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

Jesus Christ must have the preeminence. No pastor, apostle, bishop, teacher, elder or other minister should occupy the place that belongs to Him.

Those entrusted with responsibility are not masters over God's people. They are servants within His body, called to teach, shepherd, guide, protect and strengthen the people of God while continually directing them towards Jesus Christ.

The biblical order is therefore clear. There is one Master, Jesus Christ, and all His people are brethren. Offices describe functions of service, not titles of spiritual rank or honour, and Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the Church who must have the preeminence in all things.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that Christ alone has the highest place in His Church?

Personal Reflection

When your work is recognised, how do you respond inwardly? Does your response give Christ the first place?

Action Step

Identify one recent achievement and consider who supplied the opportunity and ability. Express gratitude to Christ without using the achievement to elevate yourself.

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: WE BELONG TO CHRIST

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Servant leadership begins with an important truth: we are not our own. Before a believer can understand responsibility towards others, they must first understand their own relationship to Jesus Christ.

Christian service does not begin with personal ambition, natural ability or the desire to achieve something important. It begins with belonging to Him.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**:

> *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

Paul states plainly, *"ye are not your own."* The believer belongs to Jesus Christ. Our lives, abilities, opportunities and responsibilities are therefore not possessions to be used simply according to personal desire.

This has a direct bearing upon leadership. A servant leader must never begin with the question, What do I want to build? The greater question is, What does Jesus Christ desire to accomplish through the responsibility He has entrusted to me?

A Servant Belongs to His Master

The New Testament frequently uses the word DOULOS, translated as servant. The word carries the thought of one who belongs to another and is committed to the master's service.

Paul regularly described himself this way.

Paul wrote in **Romans 1:1**:

> *"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,"*

Paul had been entrusted with apostolic responsibility, but he identified himself as *"a servant of Jesus Christ."* His ministry, life and calling belonged to Christ.

This is the proper order for every Christian leader. Before we carry responsibility for others, we belong to Jesus Christ ourselves.

We Live Unto the Lord

Paul expressed the same truth when writing to the Romans.

Paul wrote in **Romans 14:8**:

> *"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."*

The words *"we are the Lord's"* should govern the way a believer approaches service and leadership. We do not own our lives independently of Him.

Our time, abilities, influence, opportunities, possessions, ministry and responsibilities must therefore remain under His authority. A leader who forgets this can begin to think of ministry as something personally owned.

The congregation can become my people, the work can become my ministry, and success can become my achievement. Biblical servanthood corrects this thinking because we are the Lord's, and the work belongs to Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that the servant and the work both belong to Christ?

Personal Reflection

Which responsibility have you begun to treat as your own possession? How might that attitude affect the people you serve?

Action Step

Review a task or area of influence entrusted to you. Identify one change that will show you are a steward accountable to Christ, not its owner.

The Servant Seeks to Please the Master

A servant cannot be governed mainly by the desire to please people.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 1:10**:

> *"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."*

Leadership often brings pressure from different directions. People may have strong expectations concerning what a leader should say or do.

A servant leader must listen carefully, remain teachable and consider wise counsel. However, the final responsibility is faithfulness to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Seeking to please people can become just as dangerous as seeking to control them. A leader governed by people's approval may avoid necessary truth because it is unpopular or make decisions simply because they fear criticism.

Paul brings us back to the proper centre: the servant belongs to Christ. Love for people must therefore never replace obedience to Jesus Christ.

Following the Master's Will

Jesus also connected service with following Him.

Jesus said in **John 12:26**:

> *"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."*

The servant does not establish an independent direction and then ask Jesus to bless it. Service means remaining under His authority.

This requires humility because plans must be surrendered, personal ambitions must remain secondary and leadership decisions must be tested according to the Word of God.

The servant leader should therefore ask:

- Is this consistent with Scripture?
- Does this honour Jesus Christ?

- Will this strengthen His people?
- Am I acting from love or personal ambition?
- Am I seeking His will or simply defending my own preference?

These questions help keep leadership under the authority of Christ. The responsibility may be ours to carry, but the direction must remain subject to Him.

We Represent Jesus Christ

Those who carry responsibility among God's people also represent Jesus Christ in the way they speak and conduct themselves.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:20**:

> *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."*

An ambassador does not represent himself because he carries the message and purpose of another. The same principle applies to Christian leadership.

A leader must not use ministry to build a personal following around themselves. The responsibility is to direct people towards Jesus Christ and faithfully communicate His Word.

The servant represents the Master rather than replacing Him. Leadership must therefore keep Jesus Christ before the people rather than making the leader the centre of their spiritual life.

True Honour Comes From the Master

Human recognition can become a powerful temptation in leadership. Titles, praise and public attention can slowly become measures of success.

Jesus directed the servant towards a different kind of honour.

Jesus said in **John 12:26**:

> *"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."*

The servant's greatest concern is not recognition from people, but faithfulness before God. This frees the servant leader from the constant need to be noticed, praised or publicly affirmed.

There will be times when faithful leadership is appreciated, and there may also be times when it is misunderstood. Through both, the servant must remain anchored in the truth that we belong to Jesus Christ, and our responsibility is to serve Him faithfully.

Our Responsibility Is His

Being bought with a price does not diminish the believer. It gives Christian life its proper centre because we belong to the One who redeemed us and now dwells within us.

The servant life is therefore not produced by external pressure or religious obligation. Jesus Christ lives within the born-again believer, and His life within governs the way we use what has been entrusted to us.

Our abilities, opportunities, leadership and lives belong to Him. This conviction protects servant leadership from becoming self-centred and keeps every responsibility beneath the authority of Jesus Christ.

The leader does not own the ministry, the office or the people. The servant belongs to Jesus Christ and carries every responsibility under His authority.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that responsibility remains under Christ's authority and is never personal ownership?

Personal Reflection

Have you defended a personal preference as though it had the authority of the Bible? What is the difference?

Action Step

Before one decision, separate what the Bible requires from what you prefer. Be willing to change your plan where God's Word corrects it.

DISCIPLESHIP FORMS SERVANT LEADERS

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Discipleship, servanthood and leadership are closely connected. A person entrusted with leadership does not cease to be a disciple. They remain a learner under the authority of Jesus Christ, continuing to grow in understanding, obedience and service.

Jesus described discipleship as a life of surrender.

Matthew recorded the words of Jesus in **Matthew 16:24**:

> *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."*

The disciple follows Jesus Christ rather than personal ambition. This is important for servant leadership because responsibility must never create the attitude that a person has moved beyond learning, correction or submission to the Word of God.

Every servant leader must remain a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship Leads to Service

Jesus connected following Him directly with serving Him.

John recorded the words of Jesus in **John 12:26**:

> *"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."*

The servant follows Jesus. However, following Jesus must not be understood as attempting to reproduce His life through outward imitation. The born-again believer possesses Jesus Christ within, so discipleship is a continuing life of learning to yield to His Word and allowing His indwelling life to govern our choices.

His life within produces humility and His love moves us towards others. His wisdom governs the way responsibility is carried, while His servant life teaches us that leadership is never an opportunity for self-exaltation.

Discipleship therefore prepares the heart for service. The person who continues to follow Jesus Christ learns to carry responsibility according to His life rather than personal ambition.

Servanthood Prepares Us for Responsibility

Jesus taught that faithfulness in small things reveals character.

Jesus said in **Luke 16:10**:

> *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."*

A believer does not need a position before learning faithfulness. Faithfulness is developed through ordinary responsibilities as we learn to keep our word, complete what has been entrusted to us, care for people, receive correction and serve when there is little recognition.

These things matter because greater responsibility does not automatically produce greater character. Leadership should grow from a life in which faithfulness is already being demonstrated.

The servant who has learned to care faithfully for one person is being prepared to care for more. The believer who faithfully handles an unnoticed responsibility is learning something essential for responsibilities that may later become more visible.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that discipleship prepares believers to care for others?

Personal Reflection

Who could grow through your help if you gave them time and encouragement? What prevents you from doing so?

Action Step

Choose one person who could benefit from patient instruction or encouragement. Help them understand a task rather than completing it yourself.

Leaders Must Remain Teachable

One danger of leadership is beginning to believe that teaching is always something we give to others rather than something we still need ourselves. A servant leader must remain teachable.

No office removes the need to search the Scriptures. No years of experience place a person beyond correction, and no position makes someone's interpretation automatically right.

Jesus Christ remains the Teacher, and His Word remains the authority. The servant leader should therefore continue to ask:

- What does the Scripture actually say?
- Is my understanding correct?
- Am I willing to receive correction?

- Has responsibility made me harder to teach?
- Am I still growing as a disciple?

Leadership becomes dangerous when the leader stops learning. Greater responsibility should increase our awareness of the need to remain humble before Jesus Christ and His Word.

Peter: Responsibility Expressed Through Care

Peter's life demonstrates the connection between discipleship and leadership. He learned through instruction, failure and correction before carrying significant responsibility among believers.

After His resurrection, Jesus directed Peter towards caring for His people.

John recorded in **John 21:17**:

> *"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."*

Peter's responsibility was expressed through care. Jesus said, *"Feed my sheep,"* rather than directing Peter to build a personal following around himself.

The sheep remained Christ's, while Peter was entrusted with responsibility towards them. That distinction is important in servant leadership because people do not become the possession of the leader. They belong to Jesus Christ.

Timothy: Learning and Then Teaching Others

Timothy provides another important example. He learned alongside Paul and was later entrusted with responsibility to teach others.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:2**:

> *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."*

Paul taught Timothy, Timothy was to teach faithful people, and those faithful people were then to teach others. The truth received was to continue through people who could faithfully pass it on.

This demonstrates an important purpose of servant leadership. Leadership should not make people permanently dependent upon the leader. It should help them become established enough in truth to strengthen others.

The servant leader therefore does not measure success by how indispensable they have become. A faithful leader equips others to understand the Word, serve responsibly and carry appropriate responsibilities themselves.

Leadership Multiplies Service

Discipleship and leadership therefore come together in multiplication. A disciple learns from Jesus Christ, a servant uses what has been received for the good of others, and a servant leader helps others learn to serve faithfully as well.

This multiplication must always remain centred upon Jesus Christ. The purpose is not to reproduce our personality, preferences or personal methods in other people. The goal is to help believers become firmly established in Jesus Christ and His Word.

A servant leader remains a disciple throughout life. Responsibility may increase, but the need to learn, listen, submit to Scripture and depend upon Christ never disappears.

Discipleship forms servant leaders because those who continue learning under Jesus Christ are best prepared to serve His people without attempting to take His place.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that a leader should train others to serve rather than keep every task?

Personal Reflection

Which task do you keep for yourself because you doubt others or fear losing influence? How should a servant leader respond?

Action Step

Share an appropriate responsibility with someone willing to learn. Show them how to do it, and give them room to practise rather than controlling every detail.

LEADERSHIP EXISTS TO BUILD OTHERS

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Leadership in the Church has a clear purpose. It is not given so that one person can become important, gather followers around themselves or build a personal reputation. Leadership is entrusted so that the body of Christ may be strengthened.

Paul explained this purpose when writing to the Ephesians.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:11-12**:

> *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"*

The word *"edifying"* carries the thought of building up. This gives us one of the clearest tests of servant leadership: Does the responsibility being exercised help build God's people?

Leadership Should Strengthen the Body

Paul does not present ministry as something performed by a few important people while everyone else remains passive. The purpose of ministry is *"for the perfecting of the saints"* and *"for the work of the ministry."*

Leadership should therefore help believers become stronger, more mature and better equipped to serve. A servant leader does not try to keep all responsibility in their own hands or make people dependent upon their personal involvement in everything.

Instead, servant leaders help others understand the Word, recognise their responsibilities and serve faithfully according to the place God has given them. Leadership that builds others strengthens the whole body.

The Leader Is Not the Message

Paul made this clear when describing his own ministry.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:5**:

> *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."*

Paul refused to make himself the centre. His message was *"Christ Jesus the Lord,"* while his place was *"your servants for Jesus' sake."*

This distinction must remain clear in every area of Christian leadership. The purpose of teaching is not to make people admire the teacher, pastoral care is not intended to make people dependent upon the pastor, and leadership does not exist to gather a following around a personality.

Faithful leadership points people towards Jesus Christ. The leader serves the message rather than becoming the message.

Leaders Should Equip Others

Paul's relationship with Timothy gives us an important example of leadership that multiplies responsibility.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:2**:

> *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."*

Paul did not keep everything with himself. He taught Timothy, Timothy was to teach faithful people, and those faithful people were then to teach others.

This is servant leadership in action. Knowledge is passed on, responsibility is shared, others are strengthened and service multiplies.

A leader who refuses to equip others may eventually become a barrier to the growth of the body. Servant leadership does not attempt to remain indispensable because it prepares others to serve faithfully.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that leaders build Christ's body rather than personal followings?

Personal Reflection

Do you ever measure successful leadership by how much people need you? Why is that different from building Christ's body?

Action Step

Look for one opportunity to equip another person to serve without depending on you. Explain how your action should direct them towards Christ.

Paul and Barnabas Strengthened Believers

The ministry of Paul and Barnabas also demonstrates this principle.

Luke wrote in **Acts 14:21-23**:

> *"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."*

Their ministry included preaching, teaching, confirming the disciples, exhorting them, recognising elders and praying with them. The final words are particularly important: *"They commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."*

Paul and Barnabas did not make themselves indispensable. They strengthened believers, helped establish responsibility among them and commended them to Jesus Christ.

The purpose of their leadership was not to make the believers permanently dependent upon their presence. They served so that the believers could continue faithfully under the authority of the Lord.

Leadership Should Help People Grow

The purpose of leadership is not simply to keep people attending, listening or following instructions. People should grow in their understanding of Scripture, become more faithful, learn to serve, become capable of carrying responsibility and eventually strengthen others.

This is why servant leadership must resist the temptation to control everything. A leader may sometimes fear that if others grow, they will lose influence, but that attitude reveals the wrong purpose.

The servant leader rejoices when others mature. The success of leadership is not measured by how necessary the leader remains, but by how effectively others are being strengthened in Jesus Christ.

Leadership should therefore create opportunities for believers to grow into faithful service. Responsibility is not protected for the sake of the leader because it is used to strengthen the whole body.

Every Member Contributes to the Body

Paul continued his teaching in Ephesians by describing the whole body working together.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:15-16**:

> *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

Notice where growth leads: *"into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* Jesus Christ remains the Head.

The body grows as *"every joint supplieth"* and *"every part"* works according to its place. Leadership should therefore help every member contribute rather than gathering all ministry into a small group.

The leader serves the body by helping the body function. The goal is not to make every member perform the same work, but to help believers faithfully use what God has placed within their hands.

Build People, Not Personal Followings

Servant leadership must always ask what is being built. We should therefore ask:

- Are we building people in Jesus Christ, or dependence upon ourselves?
- Are we strengthening the body, or protecting our own influence?
- Are we helping others serve, or keeping responsibility because we want to remain important?

These questions bring leadership back to its proper purpose. Leadership exists to build others.

Jesus Christ dwells within His people, and His life within moves servant leaders away from self-promotion and towards the strengthening of the body. The leader serves best when believers are growing in truth, becoming faithful in service and becoming increasingly established in Jesus Christ.

Leadership has fulfilled its purpose when others are being built, equipped and directed towards Christ, who alone remains the Head of the Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that equipping every member strengthens the whole body?

Personal Reflection

Whose ability or gift have you not encouraged because their contribution might change your role? What needs correcting?

Action Step

Invite a suitable person to contribute in an area where they can help. Encourage their growth without making your own importance the issue.

CONCLUSION: LEADERSHIP REMAINS SERVICE

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Throughout this Study Guide, we have seen that biblical leadership grows from servanthood and must continue to operate through servanthood. Jesus never presented leadership as an opportunity for self-exaltation. He taught that responsibility among His people must be exercised differently from the controlling authority commonly seen in the world.

Jesus said in **Luke 22:26**:

> *"But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."*

This principle has governed everything we have considered. Leadership may involve oversight, teaching, correction, organisation and decision-making, but these responsibilities must always be exercised for the good of others.

We have seen several important principles:

- Leadership flows from established servanthood;
- Biblical authority serves rather than controls;
- Leaders must live consistently with what they teach;
- Offices are functions of service, not titles of honour;
- Those who lead belong first to Jesus Christ;
- Discipleship keeps leaders teachable and under the authority of the Word;
- Leadership exists to strengthen and build the body of Christ.

The leader must never become the centre because Jesus Christ remains the Lord.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:5**:

> *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."*

Paul's words establish the correct order. Jesus Christ remains the Lord and the Head of the Church, while those entrusted with responsibility remain servants.

The goal of leadership is therefore not to make people dependent upon a human leader. It is to help them become firmly established in Jesus Christ, understand His Word and serve faithfully within His body.

The life of Christ within must govern the way responsibility is carried. His humility, love and concern for people should be expressed through those who lead, so that responsibility becomes an opportunity to strengthen rather than control.

Leadership does not lift the servant above servanthood. It gives the servant greater responsibility through which to serve.

In the next Study Guide, we will consider The Heart of a Servant Leader and examine the character that must govern those entrusted with responsibility among God's people.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that leadership remains service from beginning to end?

Personal Reflection

What has changed in your understanding of leadership as service? Identify the attitude that still needs attention.

Action Step

Choose a responsibility you already carry and make one practical change that strengthens another person. Consider whether Christ's servant life governed your response.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

Why should Christian leadership be understood as responsibility for the good of others? Explain how continuing to serve protects a leader from using a position for personal honour.

2. Understanding

How do Christ's authority and the servant's example govern the use of responsibility? Explain why a leader's conduct must agree with the truth they teach.

3. Personal Reflection

Consider a responsibility you carry or hope to carry. Have you treated it mainly as authority, ownership or an opportunity to strengthen others? Explain what this study has corrected.

4. Response to Truth

When you are tempted to control a task or take credit for it, what attitude should change? Explain how your response can help another believer serve under Christ.

5. Action Step

Identify one useful task you could help another person learn. Whom will you help, what will you show them, and how will you encourage their own responsibility rather than dependence on you?

6. Early Response

Have you begun helping the person identified in Question 5? If so, describe what you showed them and how you allowed them to contribute. If not, what is preventing you from beginning?

7. Ongoing Practice

How will you continue helping others learn to serve without building a personal following? Describe what will keep your leadership directed towards Christ.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

Why are pastor, teacher and other church offices functions of service rather than ranks of honour? Explain how this truth relates to belonging to Christ and His place as Head of the Church.

9. Living the Truth

When someone asks you to lead, how will you use that responsibility to build people instead of depending on your title? Give one real example of what you would do.

10. Final Response

Bring together service, example, discipleship and Christ's authority over His Church. What has become clearer to you, and what will you do differently when you carry responsibility?