COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 53

The Way *of the* Servant Leader

STUDY GUIDE 5 OF 5:

The Faithfulness of a Servant Leader

An overview of remaining faithful through every responsibility.



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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This final Study Guide in the Servant Leadership module brings us to the subject of faithfulness.

We began by establishing that servanthood is the foundation of leadership. We then considered leadership through service, the heart of a servant leader and the disciplined life required to carry responsibility consistently.

We now come to the question that remains: Will the servant continue faithfully?

A person may begin with enthusiasm, accept responsibility willingly and serve well for a season. Faithfulness, however, is revealed over time. It is seen when the work becomes ordinary, when service requires sacrifice, when opposition comes, when appreciation is absent and when circumstances change.

Faithfulness is especially revealed when continuing becomes more difficult than beginning.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:2**:

> *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

Faithfulness is therefore not simply an admirable quality. It is required of a steward.

Everything entrusted to the servant leader remains under the authority of Jesus Christ. Time, responsibility, truth, opportunities, resources and influence are not possessions to be used for personal advancement. They are trusts to be carried carefully and faithfully.

In this Study Guide, we will consider:

- Faithfulness in what has been entrusted;
- Faithfulness in little and unseen responsibilities;
- Perseverance through trials and opposition;
- The place of sacrifice in faithful service;
- Accountability and correction;
- Stewardship;
- Living with eternity in view;
- Continuing until the course is finished.

Faithfulness must not be understood as human determination separated from Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within is the source of the faithfulness by which we continue in obedience.

The disciplined life considered in the previous Study Guide helps give consistency to daily responsibility. Faithfulness now asks whether that responsibility will continue to be carried when circumstances become difficult, sacrifice is required or recognition disappears.

As this module comes to its conclusion, the emphasis is not upon position, influence or outward success. The greater question is, Have we remained faithful to Jesus Christ and to what He has entrusted to us?

The servant leader may not control the results of every responsibility, but they can remain faithful under the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word. Faithfulness continues to serve, obey and carry what has been entrusted, even when the circumstances surrounding that responsibility change.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that faithfulness continues even when results are uncertain?

Personal Reflection

When results are slow or unseen, are you tempted to conclude that your service has little value? Explain why.

Action Step

Choose one duty whose results you cannot control. Carry it faithfully, and measure your response by obedience to Christ rather than by immediate success.

INTRODUCTION: FAITHFULNESS TO THE END

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The previous Study Guide considered the disciplined life of a servant leader. We saw that responsibility must be carried with consistency through self-control, wise use of time, prayer, attention to Scripture and steady obedience.

We now come to the final subject in this Servant Leadership module: faithfulness.

Discipline helps order the daily life of the servant, while faithfulness asks whether the servant will continue. A person may begin a responsibility with enthusiasm, energy and good intentions, but the greater question is what happens when the work becomes difficult, results are slow, opposition comes or the responsibility continues much longer than expected.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:2**:

> *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

This verse gives us the central question for this Study Guide: What does it mean for a servant of Jesus Christ to *"be found faithful"*?

Throughout this Study Guide, we will consider faithfulness in several areas of servant leadership. We will examine:

- Faithfulness with responsibilities that have been entrusted;
- Faithfulness in small and unseen matters;
- Perseverance when trials and opposition come;
- Sacrifice when service carries a personal cost;
- Accountability and willingness to receive correction;
- Faithful stewardship of truth, time, opportunities and resources;
- Living with eternity in view;
- Continuing until the course has been completed.

Faithfulness is not the same as outward success. A servant leader may labour faithfully and still face opposition. Some responsibilities may produce visible results quickly, while others may require years of patient service.

Neither is faithfulness the same as stubbornness. There are times when faithfulness means continuing steadily, but there are also times when Scripture requires correction, adjustment or change.

The Word of God must remain the plumb line. Faithfulness does not mean refusing to change because we have already chosen a direction. It means remaining obedient to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Faithfulness therefore concerns our relationship to Jesus Christ and to the responsibilities He has placed before us. It asks whether we will remain obedient when circumstances change and continue when recognition disappears. It asks whether truth will remain more important than personal reputation and whether responsibility will still be carried when sacrifice is required.

This Study Guide will not present faithfulness as human determination separated from Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within is the source from which faithful obedience flows.

The question before us is therefore not simply, Can I remain determined? The deeper question is, Will I continue to carry what has been entrusted to me faithfully under the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word?

That question will guide everything that follows.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that faithfulness to Christ must continue to the end?

Personal Reflection

What responsibility have you begun well but now find difficult to continue? What has changed in your attitude?

Action Step

Identify the next appropriate step in that responsibility. Continue faithfully where Christ's Word requires it, rather than abandoning the work because enthusiasm has faded.

FAITHFULNESS IS REQUIRED OF A STEWARD

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The biblical idea of stewardship begins with a simple truth: What has been entrusted to us does not ultimately belong to us.

A steward is responsible for something that belongs to another. The steward may be given authority to use, protect or administer what has been placed in their care, but that authority does not make them the owner.

Paul used this language when describing those entrusted with the truth of God.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:1-2**:

> *"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

Paul identifies himself and those serving with him as *"ministers of Christ"* and *"stewards."* He then states what is required: *"that a man be found faithful."*

Faithfulness is therefore at the heart of stewardship.

The Steward Is Not the Owner

Understanding ownership changes the way responsibility is carried.

David wrote in **Psalm 24:1**:

> *"The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."*

Everything ultimately belongs to God. Our abilities are not ours to use only for ourselves, and our opportunities are not possessions to protect for personal advantage. Responsibilities are not platforms for building our own importance, and even the truth we teach does not belong to us.

The servant leader is therefore not free to treat what has been entrusted as personal property. Stewardship means caring faithfully for what belongs to another.

This protects leadership from becoming ownership. A person may carry responsibility in the Church, but the Church does not belong to them. A person may teach the Word, but the truth does not belong to them. A person may oversee resources, but those resources are not theirs to use for personal benefit.

Jesus Christ remains the Lord. The servant carries responsibility beneath His authority.

Faithfulness Is Required

Paul does not say that faithfulness is simply desirable in a steward. He says, *"it is required."*

This is important because people often measure leadership differently. We may be impressed by ability, personality, knowledge, influence, visible results, popularity, growth or recognition.

These things may attract attention, but none of them can replace faithfulness. A person may be highly gifted and still misuse what has been entrusted. Someone may appear successful in the eyes of others and still compromise truth, while another may attract many people and yet become unfaithful to Jesus Christ.

Visible success is not the same as faithful stewardship. The servant leader must therefore ask a different question: Am I being faithful with what Jesus Christ has entrusted to me?

That question brings responsibility back beneath the authority of the One to whom the steward belongs.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that a steward belongs to the Lord and must be faithful with His trust?

Personal Reflection

Have you treated something entrusted to you—time, truth, money or influence—as your own possession? What needs to change?

Action Step

Choose one resource or responsibility in your care. Make a concrete change that shows you are accountable to Jesus Christ for how it is used.

Different Servants Receive Different Responsibilities

Not every servant receives the same responsibility. Jesus illustrated this principle in His teaching concerning servants entrusted with different amounts.

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 commended for faithfulness with what had been placed in his hands. This helps correct the temptation to compare responsibilities.

One person may teach publicly, while another serves quietly. One may carry responsibility for many people, while another faithfully cares for only a few. One may possess abilities that are immediately noticed, while another performs necessary work that receives little recognition.

Faithfulness is not measured by whether our responsibility appears greater than someone else's. We are responsible for what has been entrusted to us.

Comparison can easily distract the servant from that responsibility. The important question is not whether another person has been given more or less, but whether we are faithful with what has been placed within our own hands.

A Steward Must Remain Accountable to the Owner

Because the steward is not the owner, stewardship includes accountability.

Jesus asked in **Luke 12:42-43**:

> *"And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."*

Notice the words *"whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."*

The coming of the Lord in these verses points to the Day of Pentecost, when Jesus Christ returned as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people.

Jesus had promised His disciples in **John 14:18**:

> *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."*

That promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. Jesus did not send another divine Person to take His place. He returned as Spirit and came to dwell within His people.

The emphasis in Jesus' teaching is therefore upon the servant remaining faithful and actively carrying the responsibility entrusted to him when the Lord came.

The servant had been given something to do, and faithfulness meant continuing to carry that responsibility.

The Lord came, the Person now dwells within His people, and the servant remains responsible to Him for what has been entrusted.

The Word of God Is Part of the Trust

One of the greatest responsibilities entrusted to a servant leader is truth. Paul called himself a steward of *"the mysteries of God."*

The servant is therefore not free to change the message in order to make it more acceptable. We must not add to Scripture to support our own ideas, nor should we weaken clear biblical teaching because it is unpopular.

The steward does not own the truth. The responsibility is to preserve, teach and live according to what God has spoken.

This is why the Word of God must remain the plumb line. Faithfulness requires us to stand where Scripture stands and accept correction where Scripture corrects us.

A faithful steward does not reshape the Word around personal preference, tradition or reputation. The servant remains under the authority of the truth that has been entrusted.

Faithfulness Is More Important Than Recognition

Faithful stewardship may sometimes be noticed, but recognition is not the reason for serving.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:23-24**:

> *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."*

The controlling words are *"ye serve the Lord Christ."* This changes the reason we remain faithful.

We do not serve only when people appreciate us, nor do we carry responsibility only while others recognise what we are doing. The servant may receive encouragement and appreciation, but these things cannot become the foundation of faithfulness.

We serve Jesus Christ. Therefore, responsibility remains important even when much of the service is unseen.

Christ Within Is the Source of Faithfulness

Faithfulness must not become another standard we attempt to achieve independently through human determination. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within is the source from which faithful obedience flows.

His faithfulness within gives the servant strength to remain true when responsibility becomes difficult. His truth keeps us from compromise, while His love keeps stewardship from becoming self-centred. His authority continually reminds us that what has been entrusted belongs to Him.

The faithful servant therefore does not say, This is mine. The faithful servant understands, This has been entrusted to me, and I am responsible to Jesus Christ for how I carry it.

That is the foundation of faithful stewardship. The responsibility may differ from servant to servant, but the requirement remains the same: *"that a man be found faithful."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that Christ within is the source of faithful stewardship?

Personal Reflection

When a responsibility becomes difficult, do you rely mainly on determination or on Christ's life within? Explain.

Action Step

Before continuing one demanding duty, bring your motives and response under Christ's Word. Serve faithfully from dependence on Him, not to prove your worth.

FAITHFUL IN THE LITTLE AND THE UNSEEN

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Faithfulness is often revealed in responsibilities that appear small. Large responsibilities naturally attract attention, important decisions are noticed, public teaching is heard and visible accomplishments may receive recognition.

Much of Christian service, however, takes place away from public attention. Promises must still be kept, ordinary responsibilities must still be completed, truth must still be obeyed and people must still be treated with care.

The servant leader who is faithful only when responsibility is visible has not yet understood the full meaning of faithfulness.

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."*

Jesus connects faithfulness in little things with faithfulness in greater things. The small matter is therefore not unimportant simply because it appears small.

Little Responsibilities Reveal Consistency

Many responsibilities do not seem significant when considered individually. Arriving when we said we would arrive, keeping a promise, preparing carefully for something few people will notice or answering honestly when dishonesty would be easier may all appear small.

Completing an ordinary task properly rather than carelessly may also seem unimportant. Yet these repeated choices reveal whether faithfulness is becoming part of the way we live.

A servant leader should not wait for a major responsibility before deciding to become dependable. Faithfulness begins with what is already before us.

Jesus' words in **Luke 16:10** make this clear. The distinction is not between responsibilities that matter and responsibilities that do not matter. The distinction is between what is *"least"* and what is *"much."*

Both still require faithfulness.

Unseen Service Still Matters

Some service will never receive public recognition. A person may quietly encourage someone who is discouraged, prepare a room before others arrive or spend time helping an individual understand Scripture.

Another servant may complete necessary work that receives no public acknowledgement. These things do not become unimportant because few people see them.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:23-24**:

> *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."*

Paul gives the controlling reason for faithful service: *"ye serve the Lord Christ."*

If our faithfulness depends upon being noticed, appreciation will begin to govern our service. If our faithfulness rests upon serving Jesus Christ, the responsibility still matters when nobody applauds.

The servant leader therefore learns to work faithfully whether the task is visible or hidden. Recognition may encourage us, but it must not become the reason we serve.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that unseen service matters even without recognition?

Personal Reflection

How do you react when necessary service receives no thanks? What does your reaction reveal about the reason you serve?

Action Step

Complete one useful but unnoticed task carefully. Consider whether your willingness to serve depends upon praise or upon belonging to Christ.

Private Faithfulness Matters

Faithfulness must also continue when nobody else appears to be watching. Joseph faced such a test in Potiphar's house.

When Potiphar's wife tempted him, Joseph answered in **Genesis 39:9**:

> *"There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*

Joseph's answer reveals what governed him. He did not simply ask whether another person would discover what he had done because he recognised that the act would be *"sin against God."*

This is essential for servant leadership. Integrity cannot be limited to public behaviour.

A person who appears faithful before others but deliberately behaves differently in private is living a divided life. Faithfulness means that the same truth governs us whether other people are watching or not.

The unseen life therefore matters because our responsibility is first before God. Public reputation cannot replace private integrity.

Small Compromises Should Not Be Excused

Because some matters appear small, there can be a temptation to excuse carelessness. We may tell ourselves that something does not really matter, nobody will notice, it is only this once or the responsibility is not important.

Repeated carelessness in little matters, however, can gradually become an established pattern. Jesus warned that unfaithfulness in what is least cannot simply be separated from our attitude towards greater responsibility.

The issue is not perfection in every minor detail. The issue is whether we treat obedience and responsibility seriously.

When we recognise that something has been handled carelessly, faithfulness means correcting it rather than defending it. A small matter may provide an important opportunity to strengthen the habits of honesty, dependability and obedience that will also be needed in greater responsibilities.

Faithfulness Is Not About Appearing Important

Servant leadership can be distorted when people begin to value visible responsibilities more highly than quiet service. Someone may desire to teach publicly while resisting ordinary work, while another may enjoy making decisions but dislike carrying the unseen responsibilities connected with those decisions.

A person may also desire influence without wanting the daily responsibility that makes influence trustworthy. Jesus' teaching challenges this attitude.

The servant does not decide that a responsibility is beneath them simply because it is small.

Jesus recorded the commendation given to a faithful servant 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 commendation concerned faithfulness *"over a few things."* The servant did not need a great responsibility in order to demonstrate faithfulness.

This brings leadership back to its servant foundation. The question is not whether a task makes us appear important, but whether it has been entrusted to us.

Faithfulness Builds Trust

People naturally learn over time whether someone can be relied upon. Trust develops when words and actions agree consistently.

If a leader repeatedly forgets commitments, leaves responsibilities unfinished or behaves differently depending upon who is present, confidence will gradually weaken. Faithfulness therefore affects more than the servant because it also affects the people who depend upon them.

A dependable servant helps create stability. People learn that commitments will be taken seriously, truth will not change according to convenience and responsibility will not disappear simply because recognition is absent.

This kind of trust is not created through a title or position. It develops through consistent faithfulness.

Trust may take time to build, but ordinary acts of dependability contribute to it continually. Faithfulness in the little therefore strengthens our ability to serve others well.

Christ Within Governs the Unseen Life

The answer is not to become preoccupied with proving that we are faithful. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within must govern both what is public and what is private.

His truth governs us when compromise would remain hidden, while His love moves us to serve when nobody notices. His faithfulness gives strength to continue with ordinary responsibilities even when there is little recognition.

The servant leader therefore does not divide life into important and unimportant responsibilities according to how visible they are. The better question is, Has this responsibility been placed within my hands?

If it has, then it deserves faithful attention.

Faithfulness is not first demonstrated on a platform or in a moment of great responsibility. It is revealed repeatedly in the ordinary places of life.

The servant who belongs to Jesus Christ learns to be faithful in the little, faithful in the unseen and faithful when only God knows the true cost of obedience.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that Christ governs the servant's hidden life?

Personal Reflection

Is your conduct as faithful when no one sees it as when other people are watching? Identify one area that needs honesty.

Action Step

Examine one private responsibility. Correct a neglected detail or dishonest shortcut, even if no one else would discover it.

PERSEVERING THROUGH TRIALS AND OPPOSITION

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Faithfulness is tested when continuing becomes difficult. A servant leader may face disappointment, opposition, criticism, misunderstanding, weariness or circumstances that were never expected when the responsibility first began.

These difficulties do not automatically mean that something has gone wrong. Jesus told His disciples plainly that tribulation would be part of life in this world.

Jesus said in **John 16:33**:

> *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*

Notice where Jesus placed peace: *"in me ye might have peace."* The promise was not the absence of difficulty. The peace was found in Him.

Perseverance Means Continuing Faithfully

Perseverance is more than refusing to quit through personal determination. It is continuing in faith and obedience when circumstances make faithfulness more difficult.

Some responsibilities are carried through long seasons. Results may come slowly, opposition may arise, people may misunderstand our motives and the servant may become tired. Perseverance means that difficulty itself does not become the authority deciding whether we remain faithful.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 12:1**:

> *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"*

The word *"patience"* carries the thought of endurance. The race is not completed by beginning strongly and then stopping when the course becomes difficult.

Faithfulness continues. The servant remains obedient even when the responsibility requires endurance over time.

Testing Can Produce Patience

James teaches that the testing of faith can produce endurance.

James wrote in **James 1:2-4**:

> *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."*

James does not say that suffering itself is pleasant. The joy comes from understanding what can be produced through the testing of faith: *"the trying of your faith worketh patience."*

Trials therefore provide an occasion in which endurance can develop. This does not mean that we should declare that every difficulty has been individually sent by God for a specific hidden purpose. Scripture does not require us to make that claim.

What Scripture does teach is that when faith is tested, patience can be produced. The servant leader therefore asks not only, Why is this happening? We must also ask, How should I remain faithful while this is happening?

That question directs attention towards the responsibility we can carry rather than towards explanations we may not presently possess.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that testing can develop patient faithfulness?

Personal Reflection

What difficulty has caused you to become impatient with a responsibility or with the people involved?

Action Step

Choose one duty under pressure and take the next faithful step patiently. Avoid blaming others for the difficulty or using it as an excuse for carelessness.

Pressure Does Not Mean Abandonment

Paul experienced extraordinary hardship in ministry.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9**:

> *"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;"*

Paul does not deny the pressure. He speaks openly of being troubled, perplexed, persecuted and cast down.

Faithfulness does not require pretending that difficulty is easy. Yet each statement of pressure is followed by something showing that the pressure did not have the final word.

He was troubled, *"yet not distressed."* He was perplexed, *"but not in despair."* He was persecuted, *"but not forsaken."* He was cast down, *"but not destroyed."*

A servant leader may therefore acknowledge hardship honestly without allowing hardship to become hopelessness. Difficulty may be real without becoming the controlling truth of the servant's life.

Tribulation Can Develop Endurance

Paul also explained that tribulation can produce qualities that could not be developed through ease alone.

Paul wrote in **Romans 5:3-5**:

> *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

Paul describes a progression:

- Tribulation;

- Patience;
- Experience;
- Hope.

The difficulty itself is not the goal. What matters is what develops as faith continues through it.

A servant who remains faithful through difficulty gains something that cannot be learned simply from beginning enthusiastically. Endurance becomes tested experience, and tested experience strengthens hope.

The servant leader therefore should not measure every difficult season only by what appears to be going wrong. Trials can also reveal and strengthen the endurance required for continued faithful service.

Opposition Must Not Determine Truth

One of the most serious tests of perseverance comes when opposition is directed against truth. Criticism can create pressure to soften what Scripture clearly teaches.

Opposition can also produce the opposite response. A person may become defensive and stubborn simply because they do not want to admit that correction is needed.

Neither response is faithfulness. The Word of God remains the plumb line.

Perseverance means continuing where Scripture requires us to continue. It also means changing where Scripture shows that change is necessary.

Faithfulness is not stubbornness. The servant leader does not persevere in personal opinion simply because that opinion has become personally important.

We persevere in truth. Our commitment is to Jesus Christ and His Word rather than to protecting a position we have previously taken.

Job Remained Confident Under Testing

Job experienced suffering that he could not fully explain. Yet in the midst of that suffering he said in **Job 23:10**:

> *"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."*

Job's words express confidence in God even when he did not understand everything that was happening. He knew that God knew *"the way that I take."*

Faithfulness sometimes means continuing to trust when explanations are incomplete. The servant leader will not always understand every circumstance immediately.

Understanding may come later, and some questions may remain unanswered. But uncertainty does not require abandonment of what God has already made clear.

The servant can continue faithfully with what is known while trusting God with what is not yet understood.

Paul Finished Despite Opposition

Near the end of his life, Paul was able to say in **2 Timothy 4:7**:

> *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

Paul's course included hardship, opposition, imprisonment and suffering. Yet his final testimony was not that he had avoided difficulty.

He said, *"I have kept the faith."*

That is the language of perseverance. Faithfulness is not measured by how easy the road was because it is revealed in whether the servant remained true to Jesus Christ through it.

Beginning matters, but finishing also matters. Perseverance carries faithful obedience through the difficult parts of the course rather than allowing hardship to bring that obedience to an end.

Perseverance Flows From Christ Within

The servant leader does not endure by creating greater human determination. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within is the source of strength when our own strength feels small.

His peace remains when circumstances are unsettled, while His truth keeps us anchored when opposition comes. His faithfulness enables us to continue when enthusiasm fades.

John wrote in **1 John 5:4**:

> *"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."*

Our confidence is therefore not in our ability to endure independently. It is in Jesus Christ.

Perseverance is faithful obedience continued through difficulty because the One who lives within us remains faithful.

Trials may test the servant, opposition may challenge the servant and weariness may affect the servant, but none of these things needs to become the authority governing the servant.

Jesus Christ and His Word remain the authority, and faithfulness continues under Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that perseverance flows from Christ within under opposition?

Personal Reflection

When opposed or misunderstood, do you stand on God's Word or simply defend your own position? Give an example.

Action Step

Test one contested decision by the Bible. Continue where the truth is clear, but correct any part that is driven mainly by hurt or pride.

FAITHFULNESS REQUIRES SACRIFICE

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Faithfulness will sometimes cost us something. Serving others may require time that could have been used for ourselves, while responsibility may require us to give up convenience, comfort or personal advantage. There may also be occasions when obedience is difficult precisely because another choice would be easier.

This is where sacrifice becomes part of faithful servant leadership.

Jesus said in **John 15:13**:

> *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*

Jesus connects love with giving. True love does not exist only in words or intentions because love becomes visible when we are willing to give ourselves for the good of others.

Sacrifice Is Connected With Love

John applied this principle directly to believers.

John wrote in **1 John 3:16**:

> *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."*

The life of Jesus Christ revealed love through self-giving. John then says, *"we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."*

This does not mean that every act of service must involve dramatic suffering. Much sacrifice is expressed through ordinary acts of faithful service.

It may mean giving time when we would rather rest, listening when we would rather speak or helping when doing nothing would be easier. It may mean surrendering personal recognition so that someone else can be strengthened, or carrying responsibility when there is little appreciation.

Sacrifice is often the cost love willingly bears in order to serve another person. The sacrifice may appear small to others, but genuine love is willing to give when faithfulness requires it.

Faithfulness Cannot Be Governed by Comfort

Comfort is not wrong, rest is necessary and personal responsibilities must be cared for. However, comfort cannot become the authority that determines whether we obey Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in **Luke 9:23**:

> *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*

Self-denial means that self is no longer allowed to occupy the ruling position. The servant leader cannot continually ask what is easiest, what protects personal comfort or what provides the greatest personal advantage.

The more important question is, What does faithfulness require?

There will be times when faithfulness and personal comfort do not conflict. At other times, obedience will cost something.

The servant leader must therefore be willing to surrender convenience when responsibility requires it. Comfort may be received with thankfulness, but it must not become the master of our decisions.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that love may require surrendering comfort to serve?

Personal Reflection

Whose genuine need have you delayed meeting because doing so would cost time or convenience? What does love require?

Action Step

Choose one appropriate opportunity to help at personal cost. Respond willingly while still honouring the other responsibilities Christ has entrusted to you.

Sacrifice Must Remain Under the Authority of God

Sacrifice itself is not automatically righteous. A person can give something up unnecessarily, while someone else may neglect legitimate responsibilities and call it sacrifice.

Another person may endure mistreatment that Scripture does not require and believe that suffering itself proves faithfulness. Biblical sacrifice is not suffering for suffering's sake.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:1**:

> *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

The important issue is that the sacrifice is *"acceptable unto God."* Sacrifice therefore remains beneath the authority of God's Word.

We do not invent hardships in order to prove devotion, nor do we impose unnecessary sacrifices upon other people. Faithful sacrifice arises when obedience, love or responsibility carries a genuine cost.

Sacrifice serves obedience; sacrifice is not an end in itself. The purpose is faithfulness to Jesus Christ, not the pursuit of suffering.

Servant Leadership Does Not Seek Privilege

Leadership can become corrupted when responsibility is viewed primarily as a source of personal advantage. Paul points us instead towards the humility revealed in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:5-8**:

> *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

The direction of these verses is towards humility rather than self-exaltation. Jesus took upon Himself genuine humanity, *"the form of a servant,"* humbled Himself and became obedient unto death.

For the servant leader, responsibility must therefore never become an excuse for demanding privilege from others. Greater responsibility does not mean that service has become beneath us.

Leadership that continually protects self-interest has moved away from servanthood. Responsibility should increase our concern for those we serve rather than increase our expectation that others should serve us.

Paul Accepted the Cost of Service

Paul's ministry involved significant personal cost.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 11:27**:

> *"In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."*

Paul was not presenting suffering as something to seek for its own sake. He was describing what faithfulness had cost him.

His service continued even when circumstances became difficult. This is an important distinction because we should not pursue hardship, but neither should we abandon obedience simply because hardship appears.

Faithfulness may sometimes require continuing despite inconvenience, opposition or personal cost. The presence of difficulty does not automatically mean that the responsibility should be abandoned.

The question remains whether Jesus Christ and His Word require us to continue.

Sacrifice Must Not Become a Demand Placed Upon Others

There is another danger in leadership. A leader may speak strongly about sacrifice while expecting other people to carry the cost.

That is not servant leadership. A servant leader should be careful about demanding from others what they themselves are unwilling to bear.

Jesus did not teach servanthood from a position of protected privilege. His earthly life demonstrated humble service.

The same principle must govern those entrusted with responsibility among His people. Sacrifice begins with our own willingness to give, not with our willingness to require giving from someone else.

This does not mean that a leader can never ask others to carry difficult responsibilities. The body contains different members with different functions, and service may require sacrifice from many people. However, leadership must never use the language of sacrifice simply to protect the leader's own comfort or advantage.

Christ Within Is the Source of Sacrificial Love

The answer is not to force ourselves into continual self-denial through human determination. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within is the source of sacrificial love.

His love moves us beyond self-interest, while His humility keeps responsibility from becoming self-exaltation. His strength enables us to continue when obedience becomes costly, and His wisdom keeps sacrifice within proper boundaries so that unnecessary suffering is not confused with faithfulness.

The servant leader therefore does not ask how much hardship can be endured. The better question is, What does faithful love require of me in this responsibility?

Sometimes it will require time, comfort, recognition or personal advantage. At other times, it may require enduring genuine hardship. Whatever the cost, the sacrifice must remain governed by Jesus Christ and His Word.

Faithfulness requires sacrifice because love is willing to bear a cost for the good of others. Yet the strength to give ourselves faithfully does not come from external imitation or human determination. It comes from the life of Jesus Christ within.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that sacrifice must arise from Christ's love, not be imposed on others?

Personal Reflection

Have you expected others to make sacrifices that you are unwilling to make yourself? What effect might this have?

Action Step

Review one request you have made of others. Adjust it where necessary so that you do not protect your own comfort while placing an unfair burden on them.

ACCOUNTABILITY PROTECTS FAITHFULNESS

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Faithfulness does not require a servant leader to become isolated or independent. Responsibility may place a person in a position where others look to them for guidance, but leadership does not mean that the leader no longer needs counsel, correction or fellowship.

Every servant remains accountable. Most importantly, every servant is accountable to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Paul wrote in **Romans 14:12**:

> *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*

No position removes this responsibility. A servant leader may carry responsibility for others, but they remain personally answerable to God for the way that responsibility is carried.

Accountability Begins With God

Human accountability must always remain beneath this first principle. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and His Word remains the plumb line.

No leader, group or system has authority to require something contrary to Scripture. Neither should accountability become a structure through which one person controls the conscience of another.

The servant leader must be willing to receive counsel while remembering that all counsel must itself be tested by the Word of God. Human advice can be helpful, but it does not replace personal responsibility before Jesus Christ.

Accountability therefore does not remove personal responsibility before God. It helps protect it by allowing counsel, questions and correction to expose things we may not have recognised ourselves.

Humility Receives Counsel

One danger of leadership is beginning to believe that experience makes correction unnecessary.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 12:15**:

> *"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise."*

A person can become convinced that their own understanding must be correct simply because they have carried responsibility for many years. Scripture warns against that attitude.

Solomon also wrote in **Proverbs 11:14**:

> *"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."*

Counsel does not mean surrendering biblical conviction to majority opinion. Many people agreeing together can still be wrong.

The value of counsel is that another person may see something we have overlooked, ask a question we have not considered or identify an inconsistency we have failed to recognise. Humility is willing to listen without surrendering the authority of Scripture.

Moses Was Willing to Listen

Moses carried enormous responsibility in leading Israel, yet he was still willing to receive practical counsel from Jethro.

Moses recorded Jethro's words in **Exodus 18:19**:

> *"Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:"*

Later Moses recorded in **Exodus 18:24**:

> *"So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said."*

Moses did not treat leadership as though nobody else could speak into the way responsibility was being carried. He listened, and the counsel helped him distribute responsibility more wisely.

A servant leader does not become weaker by considering wise counsel. Sometimes listening carefully is part of faithful leadership.

The willingness to listen does not remove responsibility from the leader. It helps ensure that responsibility is not being carried according to personal judgement alone.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that humble accountability helps protect faithfulness?

Personal Reflection

How do you react when someone questions the way you have carried responsibility? What might a fair review reveal?

Action Step

Invite honest counsel from a suitable person about one responsibility. Listen without defensiveness and identify any improvement you should make.

Correction May Be Uncomfortable

Accountability becomes especially important when correction is needed. David experienced this after his sin concerning Bathsheba and Uriah.

Nathan confronted him directly.

Samuel recorded in **2 Samuel 12:7**:

> *"And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;"*

The confrontation was direct because the matter was serious. David could have used his position to defend himself or reject Nathan, but instead he acknowledged his sin.

Samuel recorded in **2 Samuel 12:13**:

> *"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."*

The value of accountability is not that another person becomes our master. Its value is that truth is allowed to reach us even when that truth is uncomfortable.

A faithful servant must be correctable. Responsibility must never create a position from which the servant believes they can no longer be questioned.

Isolation Can Hide Weakness

Isolation makes it easier for unchallenged assumptions to grow. It can also make discouragement harder to recognise and temptation easier to conceal.

Solomon wrote in **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**:

> *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."*

These verses are broader than leadership, but the principle is valuable. Fellowship provides opportunity for encouragement, help and correction.

A servant leader should therefore not deliberately build a life in which nobody is permitted to ask questions, express concerns or offer biblical correction. Isolation may protect a person from uncomfortable conversations, but it can also protect weaknesses from being exposed.

Faithfulness does not require independence from the body. The servant leader remains a member of the body and still needs the help and fellowship of others.

Accountability Also Includes Encouragement

Accountability is not only about identifying what is wrong. Believers are also called to strengthen one another.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:24-25**:

> *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*

Notice the mutual language: *"consider one another"* and *"exhorting one another."*

Faithful Christian fellowship is not simply one person correcting everyone else. Believers strengthen, encourage and stir one another towards love and good works.

The servant leader remains part of that fellowship. Leadership does not place someone outside the body or beyond the need to receive encouragement from other believers.

Paul Was Open About His Ministry

Paul also demonstrated that carrying a strong conviction from God did not require working in complete isolation.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:2**:

> *"And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain."*

Paul communicated openly with other believers concerning his work. This did not make human approval the source of the Gospel because the Gospel remained God's truth.

However, Paul did not treat independence from other believers as a virtue. There was communication, fellowship and a willingness to engage with others.

This provides an important example for servant leadership. Confidence in what God has revealed does not require isolation from the body of Christ.

Accountability Must Never Become Control

This distinction is essential. Healthy accountability says, Help me remain faithful to Jesus Christ and His Word. Unhealthy control says, You must answer to me as though I stand between you and Jesus Christ.

Those are not the same thing.

The Church has one Head: Jesus Christ. Servant leaders therefore receive counsel without creating a ruling class over the brethren.

They welcome correction without surrendering the authority of Scripture to human opinion. They remain open and accountable without giving another person ownership of their conscience.

Accountability must always serve faithfulness to Jesus Christ. When it becomes a means of domination, it has moved away from the servant order established in Scripture.

Christ Within Keeps the Servant Teachable

Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within produces humility rather than independence and pride. His truth enables us to recognise correction, while His humility allows us to admit when we have been wrong.

His love keeps us connected with other members of His body, but His authority remains above every human voice. The servant leader therefore remains open to counsel and correction while continuing to test everything by the Word of God.

Accountability is not a replacement for Jesus Christ, nor does it place another person between the believer and Him. It helps the servant remain humble, teachable and connected with others while carrying responsibility.

Accountability protects faithfulness when it keeps the servant humble, open to correction and connected in fellowship, while Jesus Christ and His Word remain the final authority.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that accountability should allow correction while Christ and His Word remain final authority?

Personal Reflection

Have you treated accountability as a threat, or placed too much authority in another person's opinion? Explain.

Action Step

Consider correction you have recently received. Compare it fairly with the Bible and accept what is true without surrendering your responsibility to Christ.

FAITHFUL WITH WHAT HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED

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Faithfulness becomes practical in the way we handle what has been placed within our care. A servant leader may be entrusted with truth, responsibility, opportunities, abilities, resources, influence or the care of other people, and these things must not be treated casually.

The question is not simply, What have I been given? The more important question is, How am I using what has been entrusted to me?

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:2**:

> *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

Stewardship requires more than receiving something. It requires faithfully caring for what has been entrusted.

We Are Responsible for What Has Been Placed in Our Hands

Different people receive different responsibilities. One person may have the ability to teach, while another may be skilled in practical service. Someone may have financial resources that can help others, while another may have time available to encourage people.

A servant leader may also be entrusted with people who need guidance, teaching and care. Faithfulness does not require everyone to possess the same gifts or opportunities. It requires us to take seriously what has actually been placed within our hands.

We are not accountable for possessing what God has not given us, but we are responsible for how we use what has been entrusted to us.

This keeps the servant from continually comparing themselves with others. The question is not whether our responsibility appears greater or smaller, but whether it is being carried faithfully.

Joseph Was Faithful in Changing Circumstances

Joseph's responsibilities changed dramatically throughout his life. At one time he served in Potiphar's house, later he was placed in prison, and eventually he was given enormous responsibility in Egypt.

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 wait for a greater position before taking responsibility seriously. He served faithfully with what had been placed in his hands at that time.

This establishes an important principle. A servant leader should not think, *"I will become faithful when I receive a greater responsibility."*

Faithfulness begins now. Greater responsibility does not create faithfulness. It reveals and enlarges what should already be present.

Joseph's circumstances changed, but the responsibility to remain faithful did not. He took seriously what was within his hands in each season.

Truth Is One of the Greatest Trusts

A servant leader may be entrusted with the responsibility to teach God's Word, and that trust must be handled carefully.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 9:17**:

> *"For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."*

Paul understood that the Gospel had been *"committed"* unto him. It did not belong to him to alter according to personal preference.

The same principle applies whenever we teach Scripture. We must not change the Word to make it more acceptable, add ideas simply because they are traditional or remove clear teaching because it is difficult.

To be entrusted with truth is to become responsible for handling truth faithfully.

This is why the Word of God must remain the plumb line. Our responsibility is not to defend our own teaching simply because we have taught it before. Our responsibility is to remain faithful to what Scripture actually says.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that truth is a trust that must be handled faithfully?

Personal Reflection

Are you more concerned to defend what you have taught or to make certain it agrees with the Bible? Why?

Action Step

Review one explanation you have given to someone. Check the Bible verses in context and correct any point you have stated inaccurately.

Abilities Are Given for Service

Abilities can easily become a source of pride. A person may be able to teach clearly, organise effectively, communicate well or carry significant responsibility, but ability does not make the servant the owner of that ability.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 4:10**:

> *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

The direction is towards service: *"minister the same one to another."*

Abilities are therefore not given so that the servant can build a reputation around themselves. They are to be used for the good of others.

A faithful servant asks, How can what has been given to me strengthen someone else? Ability becomes an opportunity to serve rather than a reason for self-exaltation.

Influence Must Also Be Stewarded

Leadership often brings influence. People listen to what a leader says, may trust their judgement and may follow their direction.

That influence must never become an opportunity for self-importance or control. Nehemiah provides a useful example.

Nehemiah wrote in **Nehemiah 5:14-15**:

> *"Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God."*

Nehemiah possessed authority, but he refused to exploit it for personal advantage. His words *"but so did not I"* show that he deliberately chose a different way of carrying responsibility.

That is faithful stewardship of influence. Authority should be used to serve, not to take advantage of those being served.

People Are Not Possessions

Servant leaders may also be entrusted with responsibility towards people, but people never become the possession of the leader. Jesus Christ remains the Head of the Church, and the people belong to Him.

A teacher therefore serves those being taught, while an overseer cares for those entrusted to their attention. A leader helps people grow in truth, maturity and responsibility.

The goal is never to make people dependent upon the leader. Faithful leadership should continually direct people towards Jesus Christ and His Word.

This is an important part of stewardship because responsibility towards people can easily be confused with ownership. The servant leader must remember that those they serve belong to Jesus Christ.

The leader is entrusted with care, not ownership.

Resources Must Be Handled Carefully

Stewardship also includes material resources. Money, property, equipment and other practical resources should be handled with honesty and care.

Faithfulness does not require extravagance, nor does it justify unnecessary waste. Resources entrusted for service should be used for the purposes for which they were given.

Personal benefit must not be secretly placed ahead of the responsibility. Transparency and integrity are therefore especially important wherever money or property is involved.

A servant leader should be able to account honestly for the way entrusted resources have been used. Material stewardship is another area in which private integrity and public responsibility must agree.

Faithfulness Continues Regardless of Circumstances

Joseph was faithful in a household, in prison and later in national responsibility. His circumstances changed, but the principle did not.

Faithfulness is not dependent upon having ideal conditions. A servant may have limited resources, opportunities may change and responsibility may increase or decrease. Recognition may also come and go.

Yet whatever remains within our hands should still be handled faithfully. We may not control how much responsibility is entrusted or how long a particular opportunity remains, but we are responsible for the way we carry what is presently before us.

Faithfulness therefore adjusts to changing circumstances without abandoning the responsibility to remain true.

Christ Within Governs Our Stewardship

Faithful stewardship is not produced by trying to prove ourselves worthy. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within must govern the way everything entrusted to us is handled.

His truth governs the way we handle His Word, while His love governs the way we care for people. His humility governs the way we use influence, His wisdom governs the way we use resources and His faithfulness enables us to continue carrying responsibility carefully.

The servant leader therefore understands:

- The truth is His;
- The people are His;
- The abilities are His gift;
- The opportunities are His trust;
- The responsibility remains under His authority.

Faithfulness means taking what has been placed within our hands and using it according to the will and Word of Jesus Christ.

Whatever has been entrusted to us should be returned to Him having been handled with care, honesty and faithfulness.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that entrusted resources should be handled with care and honesty?

Personal Reflection

Which resource or piece of information in your care could be handled with greater honesty, accuracy or openness?

Action Step

Examine how one entrusted resource is used or recorded. Put right any error and ensure it can be accounted for truthfully.

LIVING WITH ETERNITY IN VIEW

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Faithfulness is strengthened when temporary circumstances are seen in the light of what is eternal. Recognition, possessions, position and earthly success do not last. A servant leader

who measures everything by what can be seen now may become discouraged when results are slow or tempted to compromise when temporary advantage is offered.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:18**:

> *"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

Paul gives us an important distinction: What is seen is temporal; what is unseen is eternal. The servant leader must therefore learn not to measure faithfulness only by immediate circumstances.

Temporary Success Is Not the Final Measure

Visible success can be encouraging, but it cannot become the final measure of whether service has been worthwhile. Some faithful work produces immediate results, while other work may appear unnoticed for a long time.

People may respond positively, or they may reject what is taught. Circumstances may also change before the servant sees the outcome of years of labour.

Faithfulness remains important because our service is ultimately unto Jesus Christ. What is temporary must never become more important than what is eternal.

The servant leader therefore cannot allow visible results alone to determine whether a responsibility has value. Our first responsibility is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Eternity Shapes Our Priorities

Jesus warned against making earthly treasure the centre of life.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:19-20**:

> *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:"*

Jesus was directing attention beyond what can be accumulated and protected on earth. What appears secure in this life remains temporary.

For the servant leader, this affects priorities. People matter more than reputation, truth matters more than popularity, faithfulness matters more than advancement, and obedience matters more than temporary advantage.

The question is not simply, What will benefit me now? The greater question is, What remains consistent with Jesus Christ and His Word?

An eternal perspective helps the servant make present decisions according to lasting values rather than immediate personal advantage.

Eternal Perspective Strengthens Endurance

Paul endured suffering without treating present difficulty as the whole story.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:18**:

> *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

Present suffering is real, but it is not ultimate. This perspective helps the servant leader endure without allowing present hardship to control every decision.

A difficult season is still a season. Opposition, recognition and disappointment are all temporary, while Jesus Christ remains our life.

This does not make present difficulties unimportant or require us to pretend that suffering does not hurt. It places those difficulties within a greater perspective so that temporary circumstances do not become the authority governing our faithfulness.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that eternal hope helps a servant endure temporary difficulty?

Personal Reflection

When you face hardship, which temporary result or reward is most likely to distract you from faithful obedience?

Action Step

Identify one tempting short-term advantage. Choose the response that remains faithful to Jesus Christ, even if it receives less recognition.

Moses Chose What Had Greater Value

Moses faced a choice between temporary advantage and identification with the people of God.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:24-26**:

> *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."*

The pleasures of sin are described as being *"for a season."* Moses recognised that immediate advantage was not the greatest value.

Faithfulness may sometimes require the servant leader to refuse something attractive because accepting it would compromise what matters more. Temporary advantage must not be allowed to replace obedience.

Moses looked beyond what was immediately available and chose according to a greater value. The servant leader must learn to do the same.

Accountability Also Gives Eternal Perspective

Paul wrote in **Romans 14:12**:

> *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*

This truth helps remove the need to live continually for human approval. People may misunderstand our actions, praise what should not be praised or criticise what is right.

Human opinion therefore cannot become the final standard. The servant leader remains accountable to God.

That truth should produce humility rather than pride. We do not ask only whether people approve because we must ask whether our lives and service remain faithful to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Human recognition may come and go, but accountability before God remains. This helps keep both praise and criticism in their proper place.

Jesus Christ Is Our Eternal Hope

Eternal perspective is not simply thinking about a distant future. Our hope is centred in a Person.

Jesus said in **John 11:25-26**:

> *"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"*

Jesus did not simply point people towards life. He said, *"I am the resurrection, and the life."*

The born-again believer possesses life in Him. The servant leader's eternal perspective is therefore centred in Jesus Christ Himself rather than simply in thoughts about what lies beyond this present life.

His life within gives meaning to present service, His truth establishes our priorities and His faithfulness enables us to continue when temporary circumstances are discouraging.

Living with eternity in view therefore does not mean neglecting present responsibilities. It means carrying those responsibilities according to the correct values.

We serve faithfully today because our life is in Jesus Christ, and what is temporary must never be allowed to displace what is eternal.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that what is eternal must have greater weight than temporary success?

Personal Reflection

Have you allowed visible achievements to become more important than helping people or remaining true to God's Word?

Action Step

Give time to one responsibility of lasting spiritual value, such as encouraging a believer or carefully teaching truth, without seeking a quick reward.

FINISHING THE COURSE

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Faithfulness is not measured only by how well a responsibility begins. There must also be a willingness to continue until the responsibility has been faithfully completed.

Paul understood his ministry in this way.

Paul said in **Acts 20:24**:

> *"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."*

Paul knew what had been entrusted to him. His desire was not simply to begin the ministry. He wanted to *"finish my course with joy."*

The Course Must Remain Christ's Course

Finishing does not mean stubbornly completing every plan we have personally made. Some plans should change, some responsibilities have a natural conclusion and circumstances may alter what can reasonably be done.

Scripture may also expose an assumption that requires correction. Faithfulness therefore means finishing what Jesus Christ has genuinely entrusted while remaining willing to change anything that His Word shows to be wrong.

The purpose is not to finish our own agenda. The purpose is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ.

Paul described his responsibility as *"the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus."* That distinction matters because the ministry was something received rather than something Paul personally owned.

The servant leader must therefore remain under the authority of Jesus Christ throughout the course. Beginning under His authority but later becoming governed by personal ambition is not faithful completion.

Finishing Requires Continued Faithfulness

Near the end of his life, Paul could look back and say in **2 Timothy 4:7**:

> *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

These are three closely connected statements:

- "I have fought a good fight";
- "I have finished my course";
- "I have kept the faith."

Paul did not simply remain active; he *"kept the faith."* Finishing faithfully therefore means more than completing tasks.

A person could accomplish a large amount of work while compromising truth along the way. The servant leader must not measure completion simply by how much has been achieved.

The Word of God must remain the plumb line from beginning to end. Faithful completion means finishing the responsibility without surrendering the truth that should govern it.

Failure Does Not Have to End the Course

Faithfulness does not mean that the servant will never make a mistake. We may make poor decisions, become discouraged, need correction or recognise that something has been handled badly.

The important question is what happens next. Pride may cause us to defend the mistake, while discouragement may tempt us to abandon responsibility altogether.

Faithfulness responds differently. It receives correction, makes right what can be corrected and continues under the authority of Jesus Christ.

A mistake does not have to become the end of faithful service when the servant is willing to return to truth.

This does not mean ignoring the consequences of failure or pretending that every responsibility must continue unchanged. Correction itself may require a change of direction. The important principle is that failure should bring us back under the authority of truth rather than drive us into pride or hopelessness.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that failure can lead to correction rather than ending faithful service?

Personal Reflection

When you have made a mistake, do you hide it, give up or respond to correction? What is the faithful course?

Action Step

Identify one mistake that still needs attention. Acknowledge it, put right what you reasonably can and continue serving in the corrected direction.

Finishing May Require Endurance

Some responsibilities become harder near the end than they were at the beginning. Initial enthusiasm may have disappeared, the work may feel ordinary, opposition may have increased or results may not match our expectations.

At such times, the temptation can be to leave something unfinished simply because continuing has become difficult. Faithfulness asks whether the responsibility still remains.

Paul faced hardship, opposition and suffering, yet eventually he could say, *"I have finished my course."*

The servant leader must therefore learn to distinguish between a responsibility that has genuinely reached its conclusion and one we simply want to leave because it has become difficult. If the responsibility remains, faithfulness continues.

Endurance does not mean that weariness is unreal. It means that weariness does not automatically decide whether obedience continues.

Jesus Completed the Work Given to Him

Jesus spoke of completing the work given to Him.

Jesus said in **John 17:4**:

> *"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."*

The emphasis is upon completion of what had been given. Jesus did not speak of pursuing a personal ambition because He spoke of *"the work which thou gavest me to do."*

For the born-again believer, faithful service now flows from this same Jesus Christ dwelling within. We are not attempting externally to reproduce His life through our own strength.

His life within produces the faithfulness by which we continue in obedience.

The servant therefore remains dependent upon Jesus Christ throughout the course. The One who is the source of spiritual life at the beginning remains the source of strength as responsibility continues.

The Goal Is Faithfulness, Not Reputation

A servant leader may finish without becoming widely known. There may be no large public achievement, and some years of faithful service may be remembered by very few people.

That does not make them wasted. Recognition is not the final measure of whether a servant has completed what was entrusted faithfully.

The final question is not, How impressive was my service? The greater question is, Was I faithful to Jesus Christ and to what He entrusted to me?

That question brings this entire Servant Leadership module together. Servanthood establishes the foundation, service gives responsibility practical expression, the heart governs how responsibility is carried, discipline gives consistency, and faithfulness continues until the course is complete.

The faithful servant begins under the authority of Jesus Christ, continues through the life of Christ within, remains governed by His Word and seeks to finish whatever He has entrusted with the testimony: *"I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that finishing Christ's course matters more than reputation?

Personal Reflection

Which part of a responsibility are you tempted to abandon because finishing it would receive little recognition?

Action Step

Take one appropriate step towards completing that responsibility. Keep the focus on faithfulness to Christ rather than on how impressive the result appears.

CONCLUSION: FAITHFUL TO THE END

BACK TO CONTENTS

This Study Guide has brought us to the final measure of servant leadership: faithfulness.

Faithfulness is required of every steward. It is revealed not only in significant responsibilities, but also in the little things, the unseen places and the ordinary duties that may receive no recognition.

We have seen that faithfulness:

- Continues through trials and opposition;
- Accepts the cost that service may require;
- Remains open to counsel and correction;
- Carefully handles what has been entrusted;
- Keeps eternal things above temporary recognition or advantage;
- Continues until the responsibility has been faithfully completed.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 4:7**:

> *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

Paul did not simply begin well. He continued until his course was complete, and through it all he could say, *"I have kept the faith."*

Faithfulness does not mean that the servant never makes a mistake or never requires correction. Neither does it mean stubbornly continuing when Scripture shows that change is necessary.

Faithfulness remains submitted to Jesus Christ and His Word. The servant stands where Scripture stands, receives correction where correction is needed and continues faithfully with what Jesus Christ has genuinely entrusted.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:2**:

> *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

This faithfulness does not come from human determination. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His life within is the source from which faithful obedience flows.

His truth keeps us anchored, His love enables sacrifice and His humility keeps us teachable. His faithfulness within enables us to continue when circumstances become difficult.

The final question is therefore not how visible our service became or how much recognition we received. It is, Have we remained faithful to Jesus Christ and to what He entrusted to us?

The faithful servant belongs to Jesus Christ, serves under His authority and continues until the responsibility entrusted has been faithfully carried.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that faithfulness means continuing under Christ's authority?

Personal Reflection

What has this study corrected in the way you measure faithfulness—by effort, recognition, results or obedience to Christ?

Action Step

Choose one present responsibility and state how you will continue it under Christ's authority. Identify a change that will make your faithfulness practical.

MODULE CONCLUSION: THE WAY OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BACK TO CONTENTS

Throughout this module, we have followed the development of servant leadership from its foundation through to its completion.

We began with The Foundation of Servanthood, establishing that service is not an optional quality added to leadership. Servanthood is the foundation upon which leadership among God's people must stand.

We then considered Leadership Through Service, where responsibility was shown to exist for the good of others. Leadership in the Church is not about titles, position or dominion. Jesus Christ alone remains the Head of His Church, and every responsibility exists beneath His authority.

In The Heart of a Servant Leader, we considered the character from which service must flow: humility, love, mercy, patience, integrity, courage, wisdom and teachability.

The Disciplined Life of a Servant Leader then showed that good intentions must become consistent daily practice. Self-control, wise stewardship of time, prayer, attention to Scripture and disciplined responsibility help make service steady.

Finally, The Faithfulness of a Servant Leader brought us to the question of endurance. The servant must remain faithful through ordinary days, difficulty, sacrifice, correction and changing circumstances until the responsibility has been faithfully carried.

The progression of the module is therefore clear:

- Servanthood establishes the foundation;
- Service gives leadership its purpose;
- The heart governs how responsibility is carried;
- Discipline gives service consistency;
- Faithfulness carries service through to completion.

Jesus said in **Matthew 20:26-28**:

> *"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."*

Those words govern the whole subject of servant leadership: *"But it shall not be so among you."*

Leadership among God's people must never become domination, self-exaltation or religious privilege. Responsibility remains service, and those entrusted with leadership remain servants under the authority of Jesus Christ.

Neither is servant leadership an attempt to imitate Jesus Christ externally through human effort. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer, and His servant life is expressed through His people.

His life within produces the love that serves and the humility that refuses self-exaltation. His wisdom governs responsibility, His truth remains the plumb line and His faithfulness enables the servant to continue to the end.

The final question is therefore not what title we carried, how much influence we gained or how visible our service became. It is, Did the life of Jesus Christ within govern the way we served His people, and were we faithful to what He entrusted to us?

That is the way of servant leadership.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it important that servant leadership joins service, character, discipline and faithfulness?

Personal Reflection

Looking across servanthood, character, discipline and faithfulness, which area most needs a change in your daily conduct?

Action Step

Choose a specific responsibility in which that change is needed. Take an appropriate first step, depending on the indwelling Christ as your source of life and strength.

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 is faithfulness required of someone entrusted with the Lord's work? Explain why results or recognition cannot be the final measure of a servant leader.

2. Understanding

How can Christ within sustain faithfulness through trials, sacrifice and unseen work? Explain what remains the servant's responsibility when circumstances cannot be controlled.

3. Personal Reflection

Which responsibility have you found hard to continue when results were slow, appreciation absent or circumstances difficult? What has this study shown you about your attitude?

4. Response to Truth

When a faithful task seems unrewarding, how should you judge whether to continue or adjust it? Explain the difference between obedience to Christ and stubborn loyalty to your own plans.

5. Action Step

Choose one responsibility that needs renewed faithfulness. What specific step will you take, and how will you ensure that Christ's Word—not recognition or personal pride—governs it?

6. Early Response

Have you begun the step identified in Question 5? If so, explain what you did and what changed in your approach. If not, what has prevented you from beginning?

7. Ongoing Practice

What will help you continue faithful service when difficulty lasts longer than expected? Explain how Scripture, counsel and eternal hope will guide you.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

How can accountability protect faithfulness without allowing another person to control the servant? Explain why Christ and His Word remain the final authority, and use a verse in your answer.

9. Living the Truth

If you discover that something you taught or decided was wrong, how will you respond? Describe how you would receive correction, care for those affected and remain faithful to truth.

10. Final Response

Bring together stewardship, perseverance, sacrifice and finishing Christ's course. What has been corrected or strengthened in your understanding, and what will you keep doing faithfully?