

Serving Others - And Being Treated Like A Servant
By Robert J. Tamasy

In the marketplace, we hear terms such as “business leaders,” “corporate executives” and entrepreneurs in referring to people holding positions of influence and authority. But how often do we hear people describe themselves as “servants” – unless they are complaining?

The term servant can be regarded as demeaning, a term for someone of little value. Some might even view it at the same level as a slave. But in a real sense, “servant leadership” is not only a legitimate term but also an empowering approach that can maximize productivity individually and organizationally.

We can find numerous examples of top executives who have embraced servant leadership in utilizing the gifts and talents of employees and team members, empowering them to put those to the best possible use. But it requires is a willingness to prioritize the needs and interests of others first and give them a stake in matters of importance to them.

The Bible speaks to this in Philippians 2:3-4, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” It is normal for people in authority to expect special privileges and deference because of their positions, but as the passage states, it requires humility to put the interests of others ahead of one’s own.

Servant leadership is not limited only to top executives and people in supervisory roles. An employee can lead by serving others regardless of their status in the organization. As Ephesians 6:5-8 instructs, “Slaves [employees], obey your earthly masters [employers] with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, no men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.”

In reality, servant leadership rarely comes easy for any of us. As Monday Manna contributor Ken Korkow has observed, determining to serve others in the business world is not without its downside:

“You will know you are a servant when you are treated like one. I want people to view me as a good servant of God. I want them to be impressed with my self-sacrificing commitment to the Lord and to others. But that’s not the mark of a real servant!”

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“A true servant is one who works in the shadows, even invisible, never drawing attention to himself or herself – simply knowing, anticipating, and meeting the desire of the master. For believers in Jesus Christ, this means serving Him and people He sends our way.”

In our desire to become servants of Jesus Christ in the marketplace, we should look to Him as the foremost example. He said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). When we consider that for Jesus, giving His life meant dying on a crude wooden cross to atone for the sins of mankind, we understand what being a servant truly means. Even if it involves what we often describe as making “the ultimate sacrifice.”

© 2023. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. When you first hear the term “servant,” what comes to mind?
2. Does the term “servant leadership” sound to you like an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms? Why or why not?
3. What could be some of the benefits of striving to become a servant leader, regardless of one's role and responsibilities in a company or organization?
4. How do you think being a follower of Jesus Christ should affect one's determination to become a servant – even a servant leader – in the marketplace?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Philippians 1:1; Colossians 3:17,23-24; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; James 1:1-4; 1 Peter 2:18-21

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