

LEARNING TO LEAD BY SERVING**By Rogério Alves**

In the marketplace we talk a lot about leadership. In reality, however, much of our daily life centers around serving – where we work, in our homes with our families, our neighborhoods, with those for whom we are responsible, and the churches we attend. In many cases these involve endless routines in which we organize and learn to optimize so we can manage everything effectively. This is what some people call “servant leadership.”

Where do we find this exhibited? We can start with the Bible, which gives many examples of serving others. Greatest of all is Jesus, who elevated service to a standard of excellence for whomever He was serving. In addition to teachings from the Bible, His actions have inspired many literary works that have applied these principles to the workplace and leadership, especially in customer service.

In the book, *The Servant Leader* by James C. Hunter, Jesus is presented as the perfect archetype of sacrificial leadership, which prioritizes removing obstacles and meeting the needs of others with humility and genuine moral authority. It inspires not forced obedience but voluntary influence and lasting loyalty, a living example of how serving builds transformative relationships in everyday business life.

Jesus came with a purpose: the salvation of all. That mission produced wonderful outcomes – one being excellence in serving others, one of His roles here on earth. “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). Jesus was successful in every situation, teaching and serving as an example for His disciples and all who heard Him preach.

As He had a purpose among us, the moment we decide to follow Him, we should regard those we serve as we would our Lord, doing our very best – whether in a paid or unpaid capacity: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters” (Colossians 3:23).

Jesus placed those He served above Himself: “For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). He did this always with humility. “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14).

A true believer who practices the teachings of Jesus should be the best employee or service provider in any field of work, succeeding wherever they serve. However, more than 30 years of professional experience – across commerce, the legal field, and transportation – have shown me that reality can be somewhat different. What is missing? Look at the example of Joshua, who was chosen to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). He relied on the Lord.

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Believing in Jesus, we can place our full dependence on Him; every task placed in your hands has been entrusted by Him. That means all our responsibilities should be carried out according to Jesus' teachings if we are going to achieve true success. We must not forget that God will always be with us in everything we do. This is a fail-safe recipe. I leave you with one question: What contractor or employer would not be pleased to have a faithful, humble "servant of God" in their service?

© 2026. Rogério Alves is a partner attorney with a law firm in São Paulo, Brazil. He graduated from Centro Universitário Nove de Julho and is a specialist in public law from Escola Paulista de Direito. He also serves as a speaker at the Department of Culture and Events of the Brazilian Bar Association – São Paulo Section (OAB/SP), contributes to several legal publications, an associate pastor, and member of CBMC Brazil.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. When you hear the word "leadership," what immediately comes to mind? Compare that with the word "servant." Do they naturally seem to come together as one? Why or why not?
2. Can you think of someone in a leadership role who demonstrated for you the concept of servant leadership – eager to serve those whom they were leading? If so, what did this look like? What was the impression this individual made on you?
3. When you read Jesus' statement that He "did not come to be served but to serve," what is your reaction? Is it easy to regard Jesus in the role of servant? Explain your answer.
4. Many times, it is not easy to serve others, especially when they do not seem to show or communicate appreciation for what we do for them. When serving others seems inconvenient or even drudgery, how do you think can we cultivate a proper servant attitude regardless of how others respond?

Challenge for This Week

The Bible says we should "follow in Christ's steps" (1 Peter 2:21). This week it would be good to take some time to personally assess how well you are doing that, including serving others.

Spend time with a close friend, mentor, trusted advisor, or your small group to discuss how you – and they – can learn to become servant leaders more consistently and effectively, regardless of your respective roles and responsibilities.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Luke 22:25-27; John 6:38; 1 Corinthians 3:9; Galatians 5:13-14; Philippians 2:3-8

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