

“The Character of an Uncommon Leader”

UNCOMMON LEADER Sermon Series | Week One | Newbreak Church

June 6th, 2021

This week is about the character of a servant leader. We all have heard myths like: “You can see the Great Wall of China from space,” or “swallowed chewing gum takes seven years to pass through your system.” But there are myths that go beyond trivia. Sometimes the myths we believe shape how we view our calling as Christians.

For more insights relating to this week’s sermon, see <https://newbreak.church/blog/>. We post a new blog every Sunday which coincides with the sermon passage or theme from that day.

Start Here

- What is one thing that you collected as a child? What made it so interesting and valuable to you?
- Have you ever thought something like: “the only good leader is a natural-born leader”? What do you think about this phrase? How is this a myth in light of John Maxwell’s definition of leadership as “influence”?

Going Deeper Into the Message

Read: Luke 6:39-40

Myth: I have to be charismatic to be a leader.

Real leadership seeks to motivate people from the inside, by an appeal to the heart, not by external pressure and coercion. Charisma is not bad, but it is not the hallmark of a quality leader.

The ideal leader is someone whose life and character motivate people to follow. The best kind of leadership derives its authority from the inner character developed over time by a life lived following Jesus!

Point 1 – Christ-centered leaders lead others from a heart that fully follows Jesus.

³⁹ He also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. (Luke 6:39-40, NIV)

Jesus’s point with the blind leading the blind is that we cannot lead others where we ourselves have not gone before. “You can’t give away what you don’t have. But you do give away what you do have.” That is why he encourages his disciples—(that’s you and me too!)—to not see ourselves as above Him. How Jesus leads is the model for how we are to lead. And if we follow Him and abide in Him, we will become like Him. “But everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher” (v. 40).

In a world obsessed with talking about leadership, we need more conversations about followership. After all, the best leaders are first and foremost followers—followers of Jesus, our Rabbi. So, we are always leading and following—following and leading simultaneously.

But followership is essential since we will become like what we follow after. That’s because we influence others with what influences us!

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How does focusing on following Jesus help us become a better leader?
- “We influence others with what influences us!” Take inventory of things such as the music, podcasts, social media, and any other types of “voices” that are speaking into your life. How is it influencing you? What can you do to ensure that you are filling yourself with influential voices that will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)?

Read: Matthew 20:25-28

Myth – People are here to serve *me* because I am the leader.

Having the title of a leader can distract us from what a leader’s role truly is.

Point 2 – Develop the servant-heart of Jesus.

²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ **Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,** ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28, NIV)

In Matthew 20:25-28, Jesus introduces us to the concept of servant-leadership. In this passage, Jesus contrasts the leadership style of the world (rulers of the Gentiles) with his own divine perspective on leadership. The rulers of the Gentiles “lord” it over those they lead. The Jews didn’t have to imagine what this leadership looked like. They saw it every day through the domineering leadership of the Romans. This type of leadership style used power, domination, and position to force obedience. This was a “do it or else” kind of leadership.

Not much has changed from the time of Jesus. Most of us have seen firsthand how this “top-down” style of leadership works in the office or even in the home. This is not the leadership model of Christ.

In verse 26, Jesus tells his followers about a different kind of leadership. In the Kingdom of Heaven, true greatness comes not from position or rank but from being a servant. In verse 28, Jesus gave himself as an example of servant leadership. He didn’t come to be served but to serve others and give His life for the good of others. If anyone could have said, “SERVE ME OR ELSE” it would have been Jesus. Instead, He had a more humble and sacrificial perspective. He gave of Himself and put others before Himself. He recognized that His value came from being grounded in the love of His Father and not in His position as the Son of God.

Jesus commands us to have this same mindset. We must lead by serving. We must remember that our personal value doesn’t come from our position or power but in being loved by the Father. Being a servant leader is a moment-by-moment position that we choose to take. It’s also a perspective that we keep of ourselves. We do not look for the praise of man or think of how we need to be esteemed. Instead, we look for ways to care for the needs of others for the glory of God.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Can you think of a time you were simultaneously leading and following? How did this approach work for you?

- In what ways are you currently being served? Do you look down on the person who serves you or do you esteem them because of their service?

—ADDITIONAL INSIGHT—

The Importance of Serving God as a Family or Framily

*But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.***" (Joshua 24:15)

At the end of Joshua's life, Joshua brought the people to Shechem to renew the covenant before the Lord. He challenged the people to be holy and choose for themselves and their families to follow and serve the Lord only. This was an important decision that each Israelite needed to make for themselves. Joshua modeled service to God first and then to Israel.

Each of us, and our families, have to make that same decision on a daily basis before the Lord. Before we can become a servant leader for others we need to commit to serving the Lord in our own lives and in the lives of our family and friends. Service to God begins with a recognition that God is leading and we're called to follow His direction for our lives.

It's also important to note that Joshua involved his family in the service of the Lord. What are some ways that you help lead your family or "framily" (friends who are family) to serve the Lord? How do you model servant leadership in your home? What are some practical examples of this?

Read: 1 Samuel 16:7 and Micah 6:8

Myth – If I have a good *platform* then *character* doesn't matter.

But what was the reason why God chose David? *But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* (1 Samuel 16:7)

Point 3 – Lead with a heart of courage, mercy, and humility.

No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8, NLT)

God wants me to love others as He loves them, to see them as He sees them. Jesus' strength was in his humility. He had a mission and everything He did was in service to that mission. And since that mission was to draw people to Himself for their salvation, He clothed Himself with humility. In 1 Peter 5:5 we're told that we should clothe ourselves with humility because God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble. If we want God's favor in our leadership, we will begin with a humble heart.

Romans 2:4 says that it's God's kindness that is intended to lead us to repentance. We need to lead with a humble spirit, knowing that all we have and are able to do are a direct result of His gracious love and mercy toward us. This perspective leads to humility. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

When I lead in humility, I show others the heart of Jesus. I also leave myself open for God to work in and through me. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:3-4)

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What do you believe are the most valuable character qualities of leadership? Can you think of specific examples when Jesus modeled these qualities? (Ex John 13)
- What qualities do I admire in the people I follow? How can I develop these qualities in myself?
- What is your definition of humility? In what areas do I struggle with humility? What can I do to humble myself?

—ACTIVITY—

Take some time this week to investigate the lifestyle of a few people you admire. What do they do in their personal lives? What are their habits, or routines? Do they get up

early, stay up late? Do they read a lot, who do they read? Are they Christ-followers? Who do they follow?

What are two things you can do to become a better follower? Focus on doing these two things this week. Will they help you become a better leader? Why, or why not?

—SUMMARY—

How do I develop the heart of a Christ-centered leader?

- 1) Lead others from a heart that fully follows Jesus.
- 2) Develop the servant-heart of Jesus.
- 3) Lead with a heart of courage, mercy, and humility.

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

1. How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?
2. What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?
3. BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?