

Signs of Servant Leadership

March 2013 – I sat down. In a hurry!

Back in the day while attending grad school in Dallas, my friend scored a couple of tickets to go to Texas Stadium (imploded in 2010 to give way to 'the house that Jerry built' for a cool \$1 billion plus) for the Monday Night Football game (circa Howard Cosell) between the Dallas Cowboys and the then Los Angeles Rams (who several years ago slipped out of town and headed east to St. Louis).

Born and bred in LA, I was disappointed as my Rams were getting the stuffing beaten out of them in a turn-out-the-lights, the-party-is-over lopsided contest. And then, late in the third quarter, the Rams perked up and connected on a long pass play. In a rare moment of excitement (not to mention amazement!), forgetting where I was, I jumped to my feet to announce my approval. Bad idea. Very bad. There wasn't another Rams fan within miles! I sat down—quickly.

That night, dozens of Cowboy fans got to see what a Rams fan looked like—albeit ever so briefly.

While we have a pretty good snapshot of what a football fan looks like, what's our take on the profile of a leader? Make that a SERVANT leader. What does THAT person look like?

When I think about the people in my life who have demonstrated servant leadership, I have found several consistent commonalities. Let me feature a few:

Servant leaders don't focus on personal success. They think differently. Act differently. This rare breed actually gets energized by investing in others and seeing (and celebrating) their success. They're usually first in line to dish out a fist pump to signal their satisfaction for a job well done.

Servant leaders don't worry about credit. They seem to be always pointing fingers—at others. They aggressively and lavishly call out the contributions of the team. Knowing that the mission is being advanced is all the credit a servant leader is after.

Servant leaders don't seek the stage. If they are needed on the field to call the plays, they're there. But if they're needed in the press box silently analyzing the action down below and sending observations via the head phones, that's fine too. As long as the team is winning, they are at home (and at peace) behind the scenes, off camera.

Servant leaders don't use people. They don't see people as means to an end. Hired hands. They see others as fellow image-bearers. Works of art. They look not only to appreciate others, but more importantly, to set a seat at the table for the uniqueness of their gifts and strengths and passions. They believe in the wisdom of many counselors.

So what do servant leaders look like? At the end of the day, I guess you could say they look a whole lot like the picture the Apostle Paul painted 2000 years ago when he laid it on the line: *Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.*

HEY, THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Who in your life is a servant leader, and why?