

Would You Recognize a Servant Leader?

Spoiler alert: leaders come in all shapes and sizes. The narcissistic leader is suited up, looking for a platform or a press conference. The command-and-control leader is shouting directives about which hill to take...now. The micromanager is looking over your shoulder, waiting for the chance to correct or redirect. You get the picture.

But what does a servant leader look like?

Though it's been many years, I still remember when the senior pastor of the church where I served as executive pastor introduced himself at a community gathering as "one of the pastors at the church." I remember thinking, *No—you're the SENIOR pastor!* But he was making a subtle statement: he was one of the team. Not above the team, but on the team.

Servant leaders are easy to miss. That's kind of the point.

When I think about that occasion and the other servant leaders who have shaped my life, I see four things they have in common:

1. They celebrate others' wins.

Servant leaders don't measure success by their own résumé. This rare breed actually gets energized by investing in others and seeing (and celebrating) their success. They're usually first in line with a fist pump for a job well done.

2. They give the credit away.

Servant leaders are always pointing fingers—at others. They aggressively and lavishly call out the contributions of the team. Knowing the mission is advancing is the only credit they're after.

3. They're at peace off camera.

If they're needed on the sideline calling the plays, they're there. If they're needed in the press box, quietly analyzing the action below and sending observations through the headphones, that's fine too. As long as the team is winning.

4. They see people as image-bearers.

Servant leaders don't see people as a means to an end, or as hired hands. They see fellow image-bearers. Works of art—God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10). They don't just appreciate others; they make room at the table for their unique gifts, strengths, and passions. They believe there's wisdom in many counselors (Proverbs 15:22).

So what do servant leaders look like? In the end, they look a lot like Jesus, who said He came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). And they look like the picture the Apostle Paul painted 2,000 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* (Philippians 2:3-4).

Our world could use a few more leaders like this.

Here's the thing: none of this starts with technique. It starts on the inside. So which of these four is hardest for you? That's probably right where Jesus wants to do some inside-out work.

You in?

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