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THE PRIVILEGE ^{OF} SERVANT LEADERSHIP



The tension in the camp was at an all-time high as the Israelites were camped at Hazeroth. Miriam and Aaron had made well known their disapproval of Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman. Insubordination and a veritable coup d'état were mounting as Moses faced his siblings.



of others in a moment when he could have claimed victory.

This servant leadership is seen in Moses time and again. Ellen White writes, "As Moses interceded for Israel, his timidity was lost in his deep interest and love for those for whom he had, in the hands of God, been the means of doing so much. The Lord listened to his pleadings, and granted his unselfish prayer. God had proved His servant; He had tested his faithfulness and his love for that erring, ungrateful people, and nobly had Moses endured the trial. His interest in Israel sprang from no selfish motive. The prosperity of God's chosen people was dearer to him than personal honor, dearer than the privilege of becoming the father of a mighty nation. God was pleased with his faithfulness, his simplicity of heart,

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Then the command came that all three were to appear in the Tabernacle. It was here that God expressed His displeasure for Miriam and Aaron's actions, and reminded them that Moses was the servant leader who had been chosen to lead the mixed multitude to the Promised Land.

In that moment, Miriam was covered in leprosy and Moses demonstrated true servant leadership. Rather than telling Miriam she had gotten what she deserved, Moses cried out to God to heal Miriam from what would surely be her death. Moses demonstrated his care for the needs

and his integrity, and He committed to him, as a faithful shepherd, the great charge of leading Israel to the Promised Land."¹

As Christians, we are all called to be servant leaders to tell a world immersed in darkness that the ultimate Servant Leader gave all just so He could spend eternity with us.

In *Jesus on Leadership*, C. Gene Wilkes, writes about the characteristics of a true servant leader. These traits include a humble

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 319.2.

heart, being a follower of Christ, and allowing Him to lead, rather than seeking your own positions; finding greatness through serving others; trusting God so completely that you are willing to take the risk to serve others; meet other's needs before your own; and being willing to share responsibility and authority.

the face of adversity. On the ship called the Endurance, Sir Ernest Shackleton, the polar explorer, and his crew set out to cross Antarctica from sea to sea, via the South Pole. Along the way they ran into bad weather, unexpectedly slow sailing, and an early ice floe. Subsequently, the Endurance became trapped

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Throughout His life and ministry, Jesus put each of these into practice. His life was one of submission and humility. Paul reminds us to have the same mindset as Christ. *“You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.”*²

As a servant leader, one must understand the mission and then be willing to complete that mission, even if it means regrouping in

in pack ice for 10 months before external pressure crushed the ship.

At this point, it seemed as though failure was to be Shackleton’s legacy. Instead, he accepted that the mission had changed. The focus had become the safe return of each man. The crew endured five months of camping on ice floes, sailing small lifeboats through open water, and camping on a deserted crag named Elephant Island.

Shackleton realized his men were physically and mentally drained. He pushed on, with five crewmembers to pilot a 22-foot lifeboat on a 17-day, 800-mile journey through the worst seas on the planet to the whaling station on South Georgia Island.

Making landfall, the men realized they had landed on the uninhabited

² Philippians 2: 5-8, New Living Translation.



part of the island. From there they trekked 26 miles over mountains and glaciers. Upon reaching the whaling station, Shackleton could have sent a rescue party for his men. Instead, he personally returned to Elephant Island.

As incredible as it may seem, not one of the 28-man crew was lost. Shackleton had taken seriously his role as a servant leader. He accepted responsibility when the trip went wrong, readjusted his focus of mission, and risked everything for those he was leading.

Often, we try to lead only to get other people's approval. This can result in damaging leadership. In *Jesus CEO*, Laurie Beth Jones notes that Jesus had internal anchors that guided him. "He was an effective leader because he had internal anchors. He did not get his approval from external mechanisms. His actions were not based on what Peter, John, and James thought. He didn't come unglued when John the Baptist began to doubt him. He didn't care whether Caesar smiled or frowned."³

At the foot of Mt. Sinai, Aaron had opportunity to practice his servant leadership and failed miserably. Moses left the camp in Aaron's care while he went up on Sinai. Aaron forgot what his internal anchors were when the people became frightened that Moses had been gone so long. As they clamored

to return to their former ways, Aaron worried about his popularity and succumbed to the crowd's demands. "Aaron feared for his own safety; and instead of nobly standing up for the honor of God, he yielded to the demands of the multitude."⁴

One must never forget that although Jesus was a servant leader and His model is one to emulate, He came to Earth for a greater and eternal mission. He came to bring salvation to everyone who would accept His free gift. As a part of His mission, Jesus is willing to take the risk and entrust us, broken and sinful as we are, with the charge, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."⁵

As Christians, if we lose sight of this as our overall mission, we can practice all of the principles of servant leadership and still miss the point. Our true servant leadership is to reflect the character of Christ so that others will want to know and follow Him. "We are changed by Jesus not because we observe Him, but because we dare to follow Him."⁶

4 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 317.1.

5 Matthew 28:18-20, New Living Translation.

6 Wilkes, C. Gene. *Jesus on Leadership – Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership*. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., p. 245.

3 Jones, Laurie Beth. *Jesus, CEO*. New York: Hyperion, 1995, p. 19.



So he shepherded them
according to the integrity
of his heart, And guided
them with his skillful hands.

– PSALMS 78:72

