

Title The Servant Leader
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Greetings, it's good to be here. He's right; my heart is racing. I do have some bones to pick here that passed to buck, but we're just here to be encouraged and admonished. When I got the call last year, I remember, I had a hot flash. It was like walking into a sauna; it was hot. The next evening I went to an ordination in Aroda, VA, and as I was listening to Bennie Byler saying we're to work together, it was like a confirmation. Back then it was racing, and the brother who was having the preordination meeting was Wayne Schrock. He said, 'God has not given a heart of fear.' This morning, it's a pleasure to be one of God's servants. Sometimes we look at it as being an obligation. Years ago—I've got kinsfolk in Alabama and we were there talking—and one of the boys said "Do I have to do it, dad?" and he said, "No, you don't have to if you want to." At Farmville, Albert and I take turns preaching, getting lots of experience, as Uriah can't anymore. You're done preaching, and you think, "Okay, I'm two weeks off." Once, it was drudgery, but now, I think, "I get to preach again!" Some of you wish you could preach more, I'm sure. I invite you to Farmville, VA! We're just a small flock.

As I was meditating about this message, it doesn't matter about the size of your flock; it is God's flock. We are used in His hands. This morning, I would like to share with you, and who I am. Even though I've been coming for about ten years, you may not know. Uriah Shetler used to be our bishop, then we asked Bennie Byler and he consented. Some of you may know Jonas Swartzentruber and he is my grandfather from Montezuma, and then my other grandfather was from Virginia Beach. Donnie Swartzentruber is also my cousin.

Study to show yourself approved: I looked at that verse, and was wondering, what stands out most to me. The word that comes to my mind is "group." I love my constituency, but 'approved unto God.' We've found in the secular world that the subject of being servant-leader is being more popular because they are getting results out of their employees. I listened to an evangelist preacher, and he said, the longer he's served, the more his ministry is of servanthood. I've been in services where the minister sat up front, he didn't mingle with the others after serves. We should affirm our love for them. Our ministry must be approved to God. That's the thing I desire most, to have God's approval on my life. Not that we disregard our brothers and sisters, but that God can say "Well done thou good and faithful servant." We must put effort forth on our study, not just download off the Internet and read it off, but let it be Holy Spirit-inspired.

I invite you to turn to Philippians 2:1-16. [*Read.*] *Pray.*

We read in verse 5, let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus, but made himself of no reputation... Let this mind be in you. This was a servant's mind. You mean, the one who created the land we live in, the breath we're breathing? The one who spoke the world into existence? And he became a humble servant? Him? Brothers and sisters, how dare we think we're more than a servant, when the very Creator of heaven and earth, who named the stars, who parted the Red Sea—we are his servants. Once we have the mind of Christ, he can work some miracles in our life. Turn to John 13. He stands before his disciples, verse 4. (*Read*). It goes on to say in verse 12, [*read*]. We read this at communion time for feet washing, but we Christians take this further than literally washing feet, but the mind, he took on the form of a servant. It was not, at the time, the guest of honor's responsibility to wash people's feet, but Jesus did. At times, we need our own feet washed, and we trust our brothers will do that. But our responsibility now is to bend down and wash our brothers' feet. I'm blessed by a quote when we go to prison, "In this congregation, there's no big I or little you." How do those at our congregation at home view us? Are we viewed as performing a duty?

This past Sunday, we celebrated Easter. Our minds went back to Christ. We need a new vision for the price that was paid for us, that we can say that we are His servant. I had one time ended up in the pigpen, fighting the hogs for the drudge of the earth to feed, but when we went home, the Father is watching. I think we're doing our church and our people a service by making salvation too easy, when you just raise your hand and say 'Yeah, I'm a Christian.' Part of servant leadership is if we lead our children and constituents to the cross and have a face-to-face encounter with Christ, not just a light lip service but transformed inside-out. Lead those in church, our children and those outside of the church to Christ. [*Prayer.*]

What a Savior! Years ago, my uncle Noah Swartz was in our church for a while. I loved brother Noah and he touched my life. There is a story he told years ago, and it still touches me today. Back in time of slavery, there was an auction going on and a plantation owner walked by. Up on the auction stood this old gentleman standing there, and they were talking about the qualities and how good he was. But the man kept saying, 'I won't work.' The plantation owner ran the bid up and it was knocked off to him. He was now the owner of ol' Joe. On the way back to the plantation, Joe kept saying 'I won't work.' He was not going to yield anymore to the demands of the master. When he got back to the plantation, the owner took him to cottage and showed him where he would live. He said, 'I bought you to set you free,' and ol' Joe dropped on his knees and said, 'I will serve you for my entire life.'

We need to be like ol' Joe. We keep working day by day for our old master, and there's no reward for it. We need to work for a new master, view ourselves as just one of our Father's servants. When we repented, we did not receive a good deal or bonus, but an ol' dirty rag. How much more when we minister to our brothers and sisters? We're just here for a short time. In just helping our brothers and sisters, a little. In our group, we have nine total households. I look at them and think, we're on a journey together. We were singing this morning the song 'When the Ransomed Get Home.' It's a privilege to minister to our constituents, even when we need to talk to them about areas in our life. It should be a joy as we walk towards heaven, as we find ourselves in the place of ol' Joe and being redeemed. We need to see our people through the eyes

of Jesus instead of as a business investment. 'I don't want to take time to talk to that brother, he just needs to come to the end of himself.' Sometimes we need to come to the end of ourselves.

Moses felt the hand upon his life as he was called to the ministry. If you're like I, you're resistant. Moses saw his people oppressed and beaten, and he sees two fighting, and he says, 'I'm going to take you out of the place, starting by killing this Egyptian.' Sometimes we need to get the Lord in our heart so we can do it through his power, not our own. Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth, no longer the prince of Egypt. "Show me thy way." Not I, but Christ.

Ephesians 6:5-8, [*excerpts:*] servants, be obedient...not with eye service... but as servants of Christ. Someone has said, "It's amazing how much can be accomplished when no one is concerned who gets the glory." That's a mouthful. Yesterday, as I was back in the bathroom, they came in and cleaned our bathroom! Someone had a servant's heart. Yesterday I was outside when it was raining and I saw a young fellow behind a van, and he was *yay* tall, and he grabbed a gallon can of vegetables and lugging those things into the kitchen, then go back and get another one. Someone is teaching him a servant's heart. I think there is a great connection between how we view ourselves in the eyes of God and the amount we serve. The woman who came in washed Jesus' feet, Jesus said "He who has been forgiven much, loveth much."

Another reasons we are a sevant leader is because God has given us the work of reconciliation. Just down the road of Rt. 15 in Farmville there is a church, Restoration, something or another, and it's a restoration of a lot of different things. Restorations of the souls. I used to be called and asked to go and restore houses back to the original state, grant money from the historical society. Reconciliation means restoration to the divine faith. If we look at our people like a business, we're going to look for problems when we go through the motions, 'let's have Sunday night service, let's have communion.' If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. Someone has said, when you're a Christian, you should tell your face about it. We have the greatest story ever been told, and sometimes, we're the quiet in the land. The cares of our life can pull us down.

Restoration of souls, someone has said, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. I can say, "Brother Lester, I love you," [*monotone*] or, "Brother Lester, I love you!" It shows on our face, the eye is the window to the heart. I can look and see the love of God in you. We need to feel the love of God in us. Back there, *yay* years ago, I was ordained, so I have to preach. Restore relationships—He's given us a ministry of restoration, but to its original state.

Restoration of the home, in the church, between brothers and sisters. I put down here, maybe restoration on the ministers' bench. No little you and big I; all on the same page. Brother, Albert, I love you for a co-minister; he's been an inspiration. When I have an issue, and we part ways with an issue, it feels almost like my wife and I when we get in a disagreement. I feel bad down in there. I pray we never lose our plural ministry. God knew what he was doing when he put us together. If there are differences on the minister's bench, let it take care of your needs. When homes falls apart, the children are the broken pieces, and when the ministry falls apart, our church children are the broken pieces.

Restoration perhaps in financial life, the money of people—you touch pretty close to the heart. But we have financial needs. ‘You slept in your bed, you can make it’?? I was blessed by the Esh family funeral. Their house burned down and in 17 days the house was built back. Restoration. Just in our everyday walk in life we can restore people and show love when we swing the hammer or saw the board. Our ministers are not above us, they can see. We have a need in our own church we’re going to have to address. We ministers may say, ‘It’s not our loss,’ but we should identify with the needs around us.

Esther 4:14, “And how knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom as such a time as this.” Now, 2010. You know, Esther could have said, I’m just little old me, there’s nothing I can do. I’m a woman, and I can lose my life, but she chose the way of the servant. Years ago, I used to be in Amle (?) and I think you know it’s in the past. They taught me, you need to be convinced of the product before you can share the product. We need to be convinced in our hearts that Jesus is the answer to the needs of our people. If you’re not convinced of what you’re sharing—my brother Albert said Jesus can forgive your sins, and I’m telling you what Albert said, but you need to know that.

“God’s not concerned as much with your ability as your availability.” God wants to use you. Ezekiel 22:30 [*read*]. I trust this morning that this will not be said of us, as we look at our people, we’re willing to stand, to make a hedge to protect our children and grandchildren and grandparents today. As you look outside at the graveyard, you can see Mennonite names, Miller. Those people’s time is passed; it’s your time now. I’ve looked at life as a conveyer belt, and eggs may come through, and they’re gone. We’re on a conveyer belt now, and it’s our time, brothers. Rise up O men of God. It’s your opportunity to serve to give back to God by serving people. He’s still looking for godly people, for you’re not your own, you were bought with a price, so glorify God in your spirit. We look pretty good with our mutzas on and beards, and we have a Christian aura about us, but I can be so full of hate for our brother. What’s going on in here [*heart*]? We’re addressing issues like the Internet. Glorify God in your spirit as you are on the Internet. Someone put on his PC, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Ezekiel 34 is one of the saddest parts of the Bible, shepherds were pursuing their own businesses, storage sheds, counter tops, you name it. The sheep died while the shepherds went their own way. Is there no physician there? This morning, I’d like to give a resounding “Yes” to the question, “Is there any balm in Gilead?” Be used of him to minister to the people around us and have a servant heart.

Last issue I’d like to address, Peter denied Jesus three times, and when He came back, he asked Peter three times, “Do you love me? Feed my sheep.” I’d like to challenge you about the lambs we overlook in our congregation, the children. Do you know them by name? Have they felt your hands? Do they know that they are important? Sometimes we wait to know the children until they come into the instruction class. Then they have issues in their lives. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We need to confirm our lambs that they are important when they are in their mother’s lap. They are not the church of tomorrow but today. Put the cookies on the lower shelf. In our sophistication, we use words we may not understand. I don’t do that, but I’ve heard preachers... [*laughter from assembled*]. When the pastors have children’s class, but even if they can’t carry a tune in a barrel, they know, ‘I’m important to my pastor.’

Jake Hershberger was the bishop in the first church I was ever in. It was a big group. I can still see him going down the aisle with a Bible in his hand. I had confidence in him because he spoke to me. I could ask 'Can we have children's class?' Lay hold of eternal life, well done, thou good and faithful servant. May we say with Paul, Lord, what will thou have me to do? I said I would put a good word in for this book. It's called *On Being a Servant of God*. It's earmarked and marked up because it spoke to me. God bless you brothers and you serve him in your kingdom.