

If you visit Paris, you can see the statues of two men, both named Louis.

The first is that of Louis XIV, monarch of France, who is remembered for his exclamation, "I am the state!" He represents the supreme achievement of power and grandeur. His philosophy of life was that the entire nation, and if possible the entire world, should render him service.

A few blocks away is a less pretentious statue. It has no uniform, sword, or crown. It is the monument to Louis Pasteur, servant of God and of humankind—a man whose life of selfless service has been an incredible blessing, quenching disease and suffering for millions.

Today, the statue of the monarch is merely a chunk of marble, almost forgotten. But the monument to Louis Pasteur is a sacred place, where pilgrims gather from around the world to render homage.

Servant Leadership:

Fulfilling the Biblical Paradigm

eaders adopt a form of leadership based on their perspective of life. In the Good Samaritan story,² we can identify three basic viewpoints. We first encounter the thieves and their philosophy of life—I'll take what you have. A priest and a Levite next travel the road. They hold a second view—I'll keep what I have. Finally, we observe the Samaritan's perspective—I'll share what I have. Christ stated that the Samaritan was the one who exemplified a positive relationship.

Adopting the Good Samaritan's worldview can result in a paradigm shift in a leader's life, from "What can I get?" to "What can I give?" The human tendency is to focus on what one can receive or generate, whether employee productivity, respect, or acclaim. Under a paradigm of service, however, the leader focuses on what he or she can provide, such as support, understanding, or encouragement.

In the biblical view, servant leadership includes at least three dimensions. First, a leader is to be a servant of God. Both Paul and James, for example, described themselves as God's servants.³ Similarly, Moses charged the Israelites: "What does the Lord your God ask of you but... to serve [Him] with all your heart and with all your soul."

Leadership encompasses a second dimension. A leader is to be a servant of the gospel, of God's mission on earth, sharing with others the plan of salvation. Paul stated, "I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me."⁵

Finally, a leader is to be a servant of people. John wrote, "This commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." Similarly, Paul urged the believers, "Through love serve one another."

When Jesus began His ministry, it is perhaps significant that He delineated these three dimensions of the servant leader, announcing: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; [Servant of God]

Because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;
[Servant of the gospel]

He has sent me;
To heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
To get at liberty these who are on

To set at liberty those who are oppressed." $^{77}\,$

[Servant of humanity]

Scripture affirms that servant leadership is the Christian model for administration. Peter, for example, states, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others." And Christ declared, "The one who rules [should be] like the one who serves."

What are the building blocks of servant leadership? From a biblical per-

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spective, there are least six key elements. A servant leader provides leadership, values people, develops people, shares leadership, builds community, and serves others. We will consider each of these.

The Servant Leader Provides Leadership

A servant leader must provide effective leadership. The Bible highlights the following characteristics of an effective leader:

- A leader has a vision and a message. More than merely visionary, his or her leadership incorporates spiritual vision and a divine message. One morning, Elisha's servant awoke to find the city of Dothan surrounded by a Syrian army. In panic, he cried out, "'Alas, my master! What shall we do?'" Elisha answered, "'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Elisha then asked God to grant spiritual perception to the servant, to enable him to see that the mountain was filled with horses and chariots of fire.9
- A leader steps forward in response to a need. When God had a message for His people, He asked, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Isaiah replied without hesitation, "'Here am I. Send me!"10 Under God's direction, a leader has courage to confront the unknown. When God told Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you," he "obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."11 Like Noah, who faced a world of detractors and scoffers,12 the spiritual leader seeks to fulfill the divine commission, even if the popular current and his or her own preferences point in a different direction.
- In the biblical paradigm, a leader leads by example. When Nehemiah, in the face of harsh opposition, directed the returned exiles' rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, he assigned each family group a portion of the project. Then Nehemiah, with his administra-

tive team and his personal bodyguard, joined the work. "So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. . . . Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water."

In the conquest of Canaan centuries before, Caleb and Joshua also led by example. Although 85 years old, Caleb requested "the hill country," a portion of the land with large, fortified cities that was inhabited by giants, stating, "'The Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as He said." With similar boldness, in his final charge to the people, Joshua encouraged the Israelites to give God their full allegiance, and then declared, "'As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." 15

- Leaders maintain their resolve without regard for personal consequences. Daniel maintained his allegiance to God despite the threat of a death decree. Similarly, John the Baptist did not shrink from addressing Herod's illicit relationship with his brother's wife, even though it brought upon him rage and revenge.¹⁶
- · Leaders who embrace a biblical worldview provide direction and hope. A severe storm struck the ship on which Paul was traveling to Rome. Having thrown the cargo and tackle overboard, those on board lost hope. At that point, Paul stood up and said, "I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ... "Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you...." So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me." Then he urged them to eat, as they would need strength to survive the impending shipwreck.17

There are, of course, other characteristics of an effective servant leader.
One of the most important traits is the value that the leader places on others.

The Servant Leader Values People

In John 10, Christ highlighted key differences between a hireling and a good shepherd. The hired man, He said, works for personal gain. The true shepherd engages in a labor of love. The hired man does not really care about the sheep. The good shepherd identifies with the needs of the sheep, seeking to meet those needs. The hired man looks out for himself-when a threat arises, he abandons the sheep. The good shepherd not only protects the sheep, but is willing to lay down his life for them. Under the hireling, sheep are scattered and destroyed. Under the care of the servant shepherd, the sheep are safe and secure.

On another occasion, Christ instructed His followers, "A new command I give you: Love one another.... By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." The servant leader practices agape love. He or she seeks to implement the Golden Rule: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you."

Valuing people means that the leader stands up for them. With the Israelites under the tyranny of Egyptian slavery, Moses came before Pharaoh and boldly declared God's message, "Let my people go." On the journey to the Promised Land, these same Israelites, who had recently pledged, "Everything the Lord has said we will do," reneged and began to worship a golden calf. God told Moses that the people would be destroyed because of their rebellion, and that He would make of Moses a great nation. Moses replied, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin-but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."21

There is another aspect to valuing persons. A servant leader seeks to ensure that others have the tools, resources, and conditions needed to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

wo important factors that contribute to human development are the clarification of role and responsibility, and the provision of mentoring and support systems. The apostles, as leaders of the early church, recognized that church members needed to be given specific responsibilities.

Sometimes a Christian leader intones, "This is the Lord's work . . ." as an alibi for substandard work conditions, meager salaries, job overload, or the expectation to sacrifice one's family and personal life for the organization. The real reason for these impoverished conditions, however, is the lack of effective leadership. Because "This is the Lord's work," it is worth doing well. This commitment to providing a supportive setting is biblical. In creating this world, the work environment for Adam and Eve, God pronounced it to be "very good."22 When provisions ran low at the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus provided a drink the master of ceremonies assessed as "the best."²³ This clearly shows that a leader must make quality provisions for those who are served.

The Servant Leader Develops People

One of the best ways to value persons is to nurture their talents and develop their potential. Jesus did this with His disciples. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen, and at least moderately successful. When Jesus invited them to join His ministry, He said, "Follow me, and I will send you out to

fish for people."²⁴ In essence, He affirmed their talents and expanded their horizons.

After His disciples had observed His work for a time, Jesus sent them out, two by two, to transform theory into practice. When they returned, Jesus held a debriefing session, during which the disciples "reported to him all they had done and taught." Then Jesus said, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." ²⁵ Throughout the training process, Jesus sought to deepen their experience and enhance their development.

Two important factors that contribute to human development are the clarification of role and responsibility, and the provision of mentoring and support systems. The apostles, as leaders of the early church, recognized that church members needed to be given specific responsibilities. Seven men were chosen to oversee the daily distribution of food in an equitable manner. These were to be individuals "full of the Spirit and wisdom." Under the leadership of the apostles, the ministry of these men soon expanded to include evangelistic activities.26 Similarly, Paul specified to Timothy and to Titus the

qualifications and job descriptions of elders and deacons.²⁷ These specifications of role and responsibility not only guided the selection process, but also served as a reminder of areas for continued development.

When God asked Moses to bring His people out of Egypt, Moses felt inadequate. "'Lord, I have never been eloquent," he objected. "I am slow of speech and tongue.... Please send someone else to do it." God responded that Moses' brother, Aaron, would be sent to assist him. "'You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do." With Aaron at his side, Moses stood before the leaders of Israel and before Pharaoh and his court. This contributed to Moses' development and confidence, and by the time of exodus from Egypt, he spoke directly both to the Pharaoh and to the people of Israel.28

How can a leader develop people? There are at least three key opportunities for personal development within an organization, each based upon a service-leadership approach.

- First, through a carefully planned induction process, each new employee should come to understand the mission of the organization. He or she should receive a detailed job description, including everything he or she should know and do. The new employee should also receive an orientation to the policies, procedures, and relationships within the organization. The induction should include a tour of the installation, the opportunity to meet key people, and a calendar of upcoming events in the organization. There should also be a conversation regarding plans for the new employee's professional development.
- Second, the organization should have in place a professional-development program customized to meet the needs of all employees. This program can include written materials, such as manuals, guides, and professional journals; the offering of internal seminars and peer events; the provision of opportunities to attend external conferences and workshops; as well as support/sponsorship for formal education,

including certificates, diplomas, and perhaps advanced-degree programs.

• Third, development of personnel includes supervision and evaluation. Sometimes we believe that the purpose of supervision is primarily to ensure organizational effectiveness. There is, however, a parallel goal, of at least equal importance—to promote the personal development of the employee. While church organizations endeavor to implement quality programs and products, these can be achieved only if we help our employees to develop their own abilities that contribute to success, if we provide opportunities for them to identify problems and seek out solutions, and create a context in which each employee feels appreciated and connected. This represents a change in paradigm: from viewing supervision as "power over" the employee, with typical reactions ranging from open hostility to cringing compliance, to considering supervision as "power with" the employee, which sets the stage for willing cooperation.29

While induction, professional growth opportunities, and supervision are crucial for development, there is perhaps an overarching form of nurture, and that is to develop the capacity for leadership. Means for developing leadership ability include holding staff meetings focused on dialogue, establishing collaborative roles and activities, valuing innovation, and providing opportunities for shared decision-making. All of this rests on a fundamental paradigm shift—from exploitation to edification.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus developed leadership ability in His own disciples, commissioning them to "go and make disciples of all nations." We also find other instances of mentoring in Scripture: Moses prepares Joshua to assume leadership; Elijah does likewise for Elisha. In the New Testament, Barnabas mentors John Mark, while Paul prepares Timothy and Titus to be leaders. Together, these experiences provide compelling evidence that a servant leader develops people.

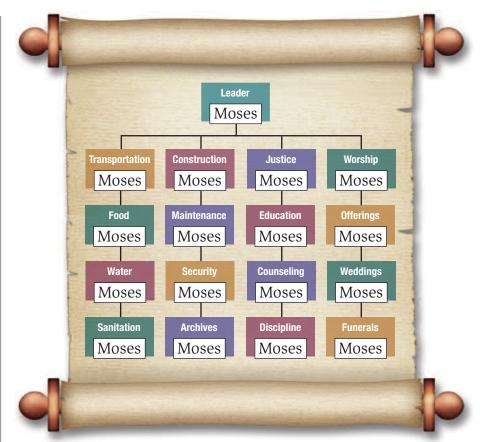


Figure 1. Moses' Organizational Chart

The Servant Leader Shares Leadership

With the Israelites freed from slavery, God designated Moses as the leader of His people. Moses, however, had a fundamental misconception of his role; he believed that he had to be in charge of every aspect of the work (see Figure 1). His father-in-law, Jethro, observed that these tasks were overwhelming for Moses and counseled: "Select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. . . . If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."32

A servant leader shares leadership with others. This was evident when Christ chose 12 disciples, rather than a single successor, to carry on His ministry.³³ The apostles, in turn, appointed elders as leaders in each church.34 When the early church held a council to determine how to best resolve a contentious issue, the outcome needed to be communicated to the congregations. "Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas."35 Notice that this decision was not made solely by the apostles; rather, the elders of the church, as well as the entire congregation, were involved in the decision. The apostles, in fact, did not create a sharp delineation between their own leadership and that of the church elders. In support of this concept, the apostle Peter wrote, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder."36

In addition to Moses' delegation of authority, we find other evidence of shared leadership in the Old Testament. In the time of the judges, Barak and Deborah shared a leadership role. When Ezra endeavored to bring about a reform among the returned exiles, he instituted a plan "in accordance with the decision of the officials and elders." In support of this team approach, Solomon wrote: "Two are better than one . . . [and] a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."³⁷

What is shared leadership? It is a collective undertaking whose goal is to accomplish a shared vision. It is not just about appointing a team, but about developing an *empowered* team. Clearly, shared leadership calls for teamwork, but it is something deeper because each individual is empowered to exert collaborative leadership within his or her areas of competence.

This perspective of shared leader-ship is based on certain core concepts.³⁸ First, it affirms that everyone has the right, the responsibility, and the ability to be a leader. Second, it recognizes that everyone yearns to be more fully who they are: capable, creative human beings, especially in areas of professional training; and leadership is an essential aspect of professional life. Finally, it assumes that the way in which we define leadership will influence how people will participate and contribute.

How do we share leadership? We first create a context in which vision and values are shared, and in which persons feel free to take initiative. We then give qualified people discretion and autonomy over their tasks and resources, and encourage them to use these tools. We clearly define the scope each person has been provided for decision-making, and then ensure that we do not make decisions that we have empowered others to take. We institute follow-up sessions to review progress and make needed recalibrations; and finally, we share rewards and bestow praise (see Figure 2).39

The Servant Leader Builds Community

A servant leader creates community. Jesus told His followers, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."40

God believes in community. "'Let

them make Me a sanctuary," God told Moses, "that I may dwell among them." After the exiles returned to Jerusalem, the prophet Zechariah conveved God's desire to "return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem."42 Christ, who came to reveal the heart of the Father, ate with publicans and sinners.⁴³ He visited in the homes of Peter, of Mary and Martha, and of Simon, the leper.44 He said to a despised tax collector, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately." I must stay at your house today."45 When two of John the Baptist's disciples asked Jesus, "'Rabbi, where are you staying?" Jesus answered, "Come, and you will see." So they went and spent the day with Him.46

Jesus did not merely teach His disciples; they formed a close-knit community. How does a leader build community? One way is by promoting unity.

Paul wrote about "the body of Christ," the community of faith.⁴⁷ Within this community, however, there is often tension. On one hand, there are

those who focus on loyalty to unchanging principles; on the other, those who celebrate the freedom to change and grow. The first group clings to the past and views change with suspicion and skepticism. The second group views the past with a certain disdain and is passionate about change. When there is insecurity and a lack of caring, the community begins to polarize and runs the risk of rupture. The core problem is a lack of consideration for the body of Christ, for the preservation of community.⁴⁸

The body of believers is preserved when the leader fosters a community of trust, a community wherein its members can distinguish between eternal truth and tradition, on one hand, and between needed growth and novelty for its own sake, on the other. A community, above all, cares for the corporate body of Christ. Paul reminds us, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit



Figure 2. Elements of Shared Leadership

through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope."49

But how does a community relate to freedom? How does a leader create unity, while avoiding the pitfall of uniformity? In an orchestra, there are three great freedoms. There is the freedom of the musician to play his or her instrument in a professional manner with a certain style, not just mechanically. This liberty, however, must take into account a second freedom, that of the conductor—who indicates when the music must begin and end, and how the musicians, as a group, should interpret the work. There is, nevertheless, a third freedom—that of the composer to expect that the work will be performed within the framework and intent with which he or she created it.

Similarly, in an organization, we have three great liberties: the liberty of the employee to carry out his or her activities, the liberty of the leader to lead, and the liberty of the institution to fulfill its mission. While mission is overarching, the leader must ensure that these freedoms function in harmony and with mutual respect. In essence, community is formed when there is unity in diversity.

The Servant Leader Serves Others

There is a final ingredient in servant leadership, one that underlies the entire endeavor. A servant leader serves. He or she walks in the steps of Jesus, who came to serve others.

Matthew records the incident when the mother of James and John came to Jesus and asked "that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." In reply, Christ clarified that a preferential position "is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."50

The other 10 disciples heard about her request and expressed indignation (they wanted to be first in the kingdom!). Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you;

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but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."51

Jesus, however, did not merely advocate the concept of ministry; He modeled it in His life. Perhaps one of the most powerful lessons is when He took the role of a servant and washed His disciples' feet.⁵² In a similar way, John the Baptist also practiced selfless ministry. When some of John's disciples came to him and reported that the masses were gravitating toward Jesus, John replied, "He must become greater; I must become less."53 In a similar vein, Peter wrote to the leaders of the church, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care . . . not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."54

Here then are the traits of a leader who ministers:55

- 1. Servant leaders follow Jesus, rather than fixating on gaining a position.56
- 2. Servant leaders humble themselves and wait for God to exalt them.⁵⁷
- 3. Servant leaders give of themselves in selfless service in order to better meet the needs of others.58
- 4. Servant leaders are willing to give up personal rights and privileges to better protect the rights of others.⁵⁹
- 5. Servant leaders feel comfortable committing themselves to selfless ministry because they are confident that God is in control.⁶⁰
- 6. Servant leaders share their responsibility and authority with others in order to achieve shared goals.⁶¹
- 7. Servant leaders expand their leadership by empowering others to lead.⁶²

Perhaps it is significant that the word administer is made up of two parts. The prefix ad signifies "toward," while the root minister means "to serve."63 An administrator, then, is one who focuses his or her life on service.

The Greatness of Least

In sum, the biblical paradigm of leadership is a commitment to serve, rather than a pursuit of title or status. It is characterized by a leader who leads with vision and courage, who values and nurtures people, who builds community and shares leadership.

This type of servant leadership is perhaps best described in the words of

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above ourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others.... Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant."64

As you fulfill the biblical paradigm of servant leadership, emulate Jesus, the model servant leader.

This article has been peer reviewed.



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 - 2. Luke 10:30-36.
 - 3. Titus 1:1; James 1:1.
- 4. Deuteronomy 10:12. Unless otherwise noted, all Bible texts quoted in this article are quoted from the New International Version. Scripture quotations credited to NIV are from The Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- 5. Ephesians 3:7; also Romans 15:16; Colos-
 - 6. 1 John 4:21, NKJV; Galatians 5:13, NKJV.
 - 7. Luke 4:18, NKJV.
 - 8. 1 Peter 4:10; Luke 22:26.
 - 9. 2 Kings 6:15-17, NKJV.
 - 10. Isaiah 6:8.

 - 11. Genesis 12:1; Hebrews 11:8.
 - 12. Genesis 6:13-7:7.
 - 13. Nehemiah 4:21-23.
 - 14. Joshua 14:6-13.
 - 15. Joshua 24:15.
 - 16. Daniel 6; Mark 6:17, 18.
 - 17. Acts 27:21-26, 33-41.
 - 18. John 13:34, 35.
 - 19. Matthew 7:12.
 - 20. Exodus 7:16.
 - 21. Exodus 24:3; 32:10, 31, 32.
 - 22. Genesis 1:31.
 - 23. John 2:10.
 - 24. Mark 1:16-20.
 - 25. Mark 6:7-13, 30, 31.
 - 26. Acts 6:1-7, 8-10; 8:5-40.
 - 27. 1 Timothy 3:1-12; Titus 1:5-9.
 - 28. Exodus 4:1-17.
- 29. There are times, however, when even a "power with" approach may not result in cooper-

ative action. After having done everything possible to nurture and develop the individual, the point may come when the leader, to retain his or her credibility and to protect the integrity of the institution and other people, must take firm action to correct or even terminate employees.

- 30. Matthew 28:18-20.
- 31. Exodus 17:9-14; 24:13; 33:11; Numbers 11:28; 14:6; 27:18-22; Deuteronomy 1:38; 3:21-28; 31:7-23; 34:10; 1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 2:1-15; Acts 15:37-39; 2 Timothy 4:11; Acts 16:1-5; Acts 17:14, 15; 19:22; Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:6-14; 8:6-23; 12:18; 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 2:1; Philippians 1:1; 2:19, 22; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon 1:1; Hebrews 13:23.
 - 32. Exodus 18:19-23.
 - 33. Luke 6:13.
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 - 35. Acts 15:22.
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 - 37. Judges 4, 5; Ezra 10:8; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.
- 38. These assumptions are described in greater detail in "A Framework for Shared Leadership" by Linda Lambert, published in Educational Leadership 59:8 (May 2002):37-40.
- 39. These elements are expanded in Robert Sutton, "Sharing Leadership to Maximize Talent" (Paragon Strategies, November 21, 2010): http:// paragonstrategies.typepad.com/psblog/2010/11/ index.html.
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 - 41. Exodus 25:8 (NKJV).
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 - 45. Luke 19:5.
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 - 56. Mark 10:32-40.
 - 57. Luke 14:7-11.
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 - 59. Mark 10:41-45.
 - 60. John 13:3.
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 - 62. Exodus 18:17-23.
- 63. See http://www.merriam-webster.com/ dictionary/.
 - 64. Philippians 2:3-7.