

Leadership Revolution

Transforming Leadership

Module 1

Transforming the Leader's Heart

Student Manual



**Training that
Transforms**

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Welcome to Your Course Workbook

We are delighted that you are embarking on this crucial journey into servant-hearted leadership. I'm Andrew Brandon, director of CWest, and along with my colleague Mike Waddell, we've distilled decades of leadership experience into this video-based interactive series. Our aim is simple: to raise up leaders who mirror the humility, authenticity, and character of Jesus Christ.

About the Course

The Video Series

This manual accompanies the Transforming Leadership Module 1 Transforming the Leader's Heart video-based training series. For details, please go to <https://cwest-mission-media.org/>

Seven Episodes on Servant Leadership

This first module of seven episodes, organized like a streaming series, introduces the foundational theme of servant leadership modelled on the character of Christ.

Future Modules

The plan, God willing, is to extend this course to include modules on Team leadership, Personal & spiritual development, Self-awareness & gift assessment, Urban leadership survival skills

Legacy Project

Our combined years of missions, preaching, church leadership, training and nurturing others form the backbone of this curriculum.

Why Interactive Learning

Early in my ministry, I loved the drama of preaching—but discovered that without follow-up, even the most powerful sermon loses its impact. Jesus never lectured from a distance; He asked questions, taught on the job, and engaged His learners. After 50 years of teaching, we're convinced that you learn best by doing. So, opportunities to reinforce your learning are sprinkled throughout the module by providing:

- Reflective questions after each section
- Practical assignments grounded in real-world case studies
- Opportunities for honest self-assessment and biblical thought

How to Use This Workbook

Download the Manual

This manual covers all seven sessions and contains the full teaching notes, discussion guides, and footnotes for deeper study. It's free to download.

Answer Honestly

Engage fully with the questions and assignments—truthful reflection fuels real growth. Having a trusted person with whom you can discuss the challenges that emerge will pay dividends. Use the space provide in this workbook, or use a notebook, to record your answers and thoughts for later reflection.

Apply your Learning

Now mine for hidden gold by examining your responses alongside the key insights from the teaching. Reflect on how these discoveries could shape your understanding and practice.

Form an Accountability Group

Whether peers, diaconate members, or aspiring leaders, share your journey. Group feedback prevents self-deception and fosters mutual encouragement.

About CWEST

At CWEST, our passion is for person-centred training that nurtures individuals in their walk with God and equips them for impactful ministry. With a strong emphasis on prayer, self-awareness, and the discovery of personal gifting, we focus on developing leadership, team-building, and evangelistic skills. We serve alongside local churches encouraging meaningful one-on-one discipleship. As a multi-ethnic network of cross-cultural missionaries, we are devoted to empowering churches to become vibrant, diverse communities of worship and mission—sanctuaries where people from every culture are welcomed and valued.

Meet Your Guides

Andrew Brandon

Andrew, the founder of CWEST, brings fifty years of experience as an international evangelist, Bible teacher, and dramatist—guiding missions around the globe, training and mentoring evangelists and disciple-makers, and partnering with hundreds of churches and Christian organizations. In this series, he leads the case studies and will teach later modules on spiritual formation and urban leadership survival.

Mike Waddell

Leaving the corporate world, Mike joined Claybury International—a Christian ministry dedicated to cultivating Christlike, servant-hearted leaders in both church and para-church contexts. Now, drawing on more than 30 years of church leadership experience and serving as a member of the CWEST team, he opens this series by exploring the transformative power of Christlike, servant-hearted leadership.

1. The King who Kneels to Serve

Upside-Down Leadership: Walking with the Servant King

One world leader stands out as utterly unique; his teaching and example turn secular ideas of leadership upside down. His name is Jesus, and he has changed the world. He had no political power, no army at his disposal, no royal patronage, no international profile or commercial clout, but he has done more to challenge our understanding of leadership than any other man in history. Those who have been impacted by his teaching and example, men like Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu and Mahatma Ghandi, are regarded as the outstanding leaders of recent history.

Without practical teaching on the leadership style of Jesus, our tendency is to be influenced by secular approaches. The consequences are far reaching. The church imitates the world and is governed by the same drives and ambitions. Without following the radical example and teaching of Jesus, the church becomes a subculture, a microcosm of the world.

In this series, we invite you to walk with Jesus, sit at his feet, listen to his teaching, observe his example and wrestle with the implications for our leadership practice.

In the seven episodes in this module, we'll be learning what Jesus taught and modelled about leadership. In this episode, we join the disciples at the 'Last Supper' and learn from Jesus as he washes their feet.

Reflections

Before we begin in earnest, let's stop for a moment and answer the following questions. We'll be posing questions throughout the course, and we suggest that you pause the video and record your answers in your workbook.

- Consider the best Christian leader you have known and list their qualities and flaws.
- Now, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is identical, 5 completely different) how do you think, they compare to your view of the ideal Christian leader? Jot down the reasons for your answer.

Notes

Foot Washing – A Visual Parable

First, read and reflect on John 13:1-16

Wow, what a story! This must be the most revolutionary leadership mandate in history.

Jesus turns upside down every traditional idea about leadership, position, status and power. His message is true in London, Lagos, Tokyo, Beijing, wherever. It's binding on us all.

In this story, we enter the narrow gate into God's Kingdom. This Kingdom has different values and they will transform our thinking and dramatically change our behaviour. That's what Paul meant when he said, **"No longer be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."**. Paul is insisting on a complete reset of our thinking, so that our minds are aligned with God and not the world.

No wonder Kingdom living is disorientating. Secular values are turned on their head: put others first, the meek inherit the earth, the weak are strong, the poor are rich, the last are first, the humble are exalted and the greatest serve. The rules are changed, gravity is reversed and we're walking upside down.

Reflections

In the light of this, let's dig into the passage with the following questions. Jot your thoughts down in the workbook:

- How did Jesus understand himself, his origin and identity, and how did he understand his role as a leader?
- Why didn't it occur to the disciples to wash feet?
- What does Peter's reaction to feet-washing tell us about his understanding of leadership?
- Then, reflect on Jesus's instruction and promise: ***"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them"***. Give concrete examples of how this applies today?

Notes

Leadership, Redefined by a Towel and a Basin

So, now you've answered the questions, let's continue to mine this passage for seams of gold.

In Palestine, roads were generally dusty tracks. Most people walked and their sandaled feet would soon be filthy. It was the task of the lowest menial slave to wash the feet of family and guests as they arrived. Customarily, there would be a bowl of water and towels for this purpose at the door. Feet-washing was an important part of social etiquette. To neglect it, was a social snub and the height of rudeness.

So, what's happening in this story? Let's reconstruct it. The disciples file into the room. There's no one at the door to wash feet and no volunteers. Why? Well, whoever stoops to wash feet admits to being the lowest person in the room. As we see from Luke's record of the Passover Supper (Luke 22), the disciples are in the middle of an argument about who is to be the greatest. The topic is incendiary, tempers flare. Jesus is the Messiah and they're quarrelling over the best seats in His Kingdom. Feet washing is the last thing on their minds.

This story has captured the imagination of artists and writers for two thousand years. In Da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper, the disciples sit politely at a high table with their feet discretely hidden - but this is not their reality: they recline on couches, head-to-foot; Peter's feet are sticking in the face of John and so on. It's not a pretty sight, and the smell!!! Remember, they walk on dusty tracks used by all kinds of animals, and none of them are house-trained; the stink of dirty feet would ruin any meal.

So, why doesn't Jesus react to the omission? John doesn't tell us, so we can only speculate.

What we can surmise from the passage is that the bowl and water for feet washing, along with the towel, are already present in the room but are resolutely ignored. No disciple is willing to lose face and play the part of a menial servant. Does Jesus delay his action because he's waiting for a disciple to serve the others by washing their feet? We don't know, but he finally takes the initiative. His action is the last thing his disciples expect. The disciples' and Jesus's expectations of greatness are in a head-on collision. There can only be one winner.

The disciples draw their cue from their culture, and, as we do today, they think of leadership in terms of power, rule and status – it's a worldly mindset. Jesus, however, understands his mission as obedience, servanthood, suffering and glory. For the disciples, the Last Supper is a preview of the Messianic Banquet¹ and the promise of their elevation to world rule. They miss the significance of it completely.

What's the disciples' problem?

Well, first century Jews regard the Messiah as a conquering warrior who defeats Israel's enemies and elevates the nation to world power. The disciples accept Jesus as the Messiah but their theology conflicts with their direct experience of him. He is an enigma. Jesus, on

¹ The Messianic banquet is symbolic of the time when the Messiah establishes his reign on earth and is recognised as it rightful ruler.

the other hand, is in no doubt about his Messiahship and his purpose. He sees himself as the 'Suffering Servant', the Lamb of God **'who takes away the sin of the world'**². He rejects the sword and the politics of power and serves with a wash basin and rules from the cross.

The disciples should've known better; it was never a secret; Jesus spoke openly about his role as a servant and his sacrificial death. Sadly, they're deafened by the noise of their expectations and they never hear him. So, Jesus takes drastic action: he detonates a bomb. Their noise is silenced, their expectations blown to pieces and they're suddenly confronted with the realities of an alternative kingdom.

Jesus rises from the table, strips off his outer clothing, wraps a towel around his waist and fills a bowl with water. What on earth is he doing? Then things get seriously weird; he kneels and, one by one, washes the disciples' filthy feet. The floor tilts, the walls fall away, the ceiling vanishes, and they tumble into Jesus's upside-down Kingdom.

We'll leave them there for a moment, stunned and incredulous.

Remarkably, this incident is prefaced by an insight into Jesus's self-understanding. John writes: **'Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.'**³

This is sheer genius! In a few words, John compresses mind boggling ideas about Jesus:

- His origin – He comes from the Father,
- His status – He is the Father's only son,
- His authority – The Father has placed all things under His power,
- His destination – He will soon return to the Father.

After this introduction, we expect something huge: a choir of angels singing his praises, Jesus teleported to heaven on a cloud of glory, the full heavenly light show. Instead, the feet washing incident immediately after is a 'vertigo moment', a clever set-up, deliberately inserted to challenge our pre-conceived ideas about leadership and greatness.

We glibly quote the Scripture: **'... whoever wants to be first must be your slave'**⁴ and we pay lip-service to the principle: a fine sentiment and worthy of our Lord, but totally unrealistic. Yet here is Jesus living it out and instructing us to follow his example.

The egos of the disciples are reaching for the stars; Jesus brings them down to earth with a crash:

"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

² John 1:29

³ John 13:3

⁴ Matthew 20:27

Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”⁵

The all-powerful Creator of the universe has just demonstrated that true greatness is not exercised through domination, but servanthood. The practical lesson is inescapable: Those of us who lead must do so in humility and service to others. In his Kingdom the way up is the way down.

So, Let’s return to the disciples.

As we dig further into this story it’s evident that they haven’t made the connection between servanthood and leadership. Better the stink of dirty feet than the undignified task of doing something about it.

Jesus’s action stuns them. How can the Messiah stoop to wash feet? This behaviour doesn’t feature in their guidebook on ‘Messianic etiquette’. Peter reacts impulsively: **“You shall never wash my feet.”**⁶ He’s scandalised by the very thought of it: his Messiah, Lord and Teacher, stooping to wash his feet! Never!

In Peter’s thinking, Jesus breaks every rule that regulates the behaviour of important folk toward their subordinates. His refusal to allow Jesus to wash his feet is almost a reprimand: “Jesus, you’re the ultimate VIP! Get a grip, you’re the Messiah, the Chosen One! It’s beneath your dignity and rank to humble yourself and wash feet. By all the holy saints and prophets, it’s the job of slaves.”

Jesus’ reply stuns like a blow: **“Unless I wash you, you have no part in me.”**

Peter’s rocked and he reels on the ropes; he reacts with a wild swing: **“Then Lord, not just my feet but my hands and head as well.”**

He wants Jesus, but on his terms. He’s missed the point altogether. Decoded, Jesus has said to Peter: “Follow my example of servant leadership or not at all.” A tough lesson for Peter to learn; it is for all of us.

In our next Session we’ll further explore Peter’s reaction and the true pattern of servant leadership.

Reflections

Let’s conclude this section by reflecting on the things we’ve discovered by answering the following questions:

1. What influences have shaped your view of leadership?

The following supplementary questions will assist you in your answers:

⁵ John 13:13-17

⁶ John 13:8-9

- How is leadership exercised in the country of your childhood?
 - If you've emigrated, how does leadership work in your current country?
 - How is leadership modelled in your family?
 - How does it function at work?
 - How does it operate in your church and denomination?
 - How do all of these factors influence how you lead people?
2. In view of all these leadership influences, what tensions have you experienced?
3. Then, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is identical and 5 is completely different) how do you think that your style of leadership compares to Jesus's teaching and example in John 13? Jot down the reasons for your score.

Notes

2. Two Worlds Collide

The Scandal of Servanthood

We've just delved into the Last Supper and the account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet and witnessed Peter's response. While the other disciples were shocked but compliant, Peter is outraged. His indignant reaction is secretly shared by them all. Feet washing is not the behaviour they expect from the Messiah.

Why does Peter react so negatively?

The sudden shock of Jesus's action exposes his true feelings. It's a moment of truth that reveals Peter's actual values and perspectives.

All his ideas about leadership and God are dramatically challenged. You see, Peter understood leadership as a descending hierarchy, a staircase, if you will, rather than a plateau. Enthroned at the top of the staircase is God and beside him, sharing his rule and authority, is Jesus the Messiah. All other leaders are arranged by rank and occupy the steps below.

Now we're looking at the world through Peter's eyes. Jesus has deliberately descended to the very lowest step, exchanged the robes of majesty for the rags of a slave and insisted on washing his feet. Peter is scandalised! This is no way for the Messiah to behave! He should know better.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus has repeatedly taught that to lead in his Kingdom is to serve⁷, but so strong are Peter's preconceptions that he fails to understand. Indeed, his refusal to allow Jesus to wash his feet is a covert rebuke. What's going on here? All Peter's examples of leadership are derived from his world; he is a man of his culture and, like us, is profoundly influenced by what's happening around him. So, let's visit First Century Palestine.

The soundtrack of Peter's life is the barked commands of Centurions and the stamp of Legions, the daily reminder of Roman occupation. In Peter's home state of Galilee, Herod, the regional ruler, is embroiled in a power-play with the Roman Governor and his own brother. In the capital, Jerusalem, a dynasty of mafia-like Godfathers control the Priesthood and retain power by bribery, political manoeuvring and the recruitment of brutal enforcers. The Sanhedrin, the nation's ruling council, is dominated by an unscrupulous, self-serving aristocracy. The behaviour of leaders has been shaped by millennia of Middle Eastern tradition⁸. The kings of Egypt and Mesopotamia were despots and even Israel's monarchs

⁷ Matthew 20:24-28

⁸ In Egypt, the Pharaohs had always been regarded as gods from birth, begotten by Ra, the sun god, and part of the pantheon of Egyptian deities. Many of the rulers of the ancient Mesopotamia kingdoms and the later Greek rulers of Alexander's divided empire, had divine pretensions. Indeed, Alexander regarded himself as the son of Zeus, king of the Greek pantheon of gods who reigned from Mount Olympus. The Romans turned Emperor worship into a cult, but it is unlikely that many of them took their divinity

were autocratic. All this influenced expectations about the Messiah. He was regarded as a righteous autocrat who topples rulers from their thrones and rules as the earth's premier king.

A 'Servant King' doesn't fit Peter's photofit of the Messiah. In his view, leaders command and their subordinates obey and serve. Jesus's role as the Servant King slams headlong into the barricade of Peter's preconceptions. We may experience a similar collision today. We pay lip service to servant leadership but rarely practise it. The problem is exacerbated by the ghosts of our own history.

In Western culture, we recoil from the idea of servanthood because we associate it with the barbarism of chattel slavery and the tyranny of Europe's feudal and class systems. This generates a basic misunderstanding of Jesus's teaching on servanthood. The Bible repeatedly reveals that it is not enforced servitude but the voluntary decision to follow his example and lay down our lives in service and sacrifice for others. Regardless of our country, ethnicity, and culture, most of us have grown up in worlds where 'command and control' leadership is the norm.

Peter's problem is our problem: we've been welcomed into a completely different Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, and we find it difficult to come to terms with its values. They're completely out of sync with those that governed us in our former lives. Consequently, when we enter God's Kingdom our thinking needs to change – a total mind-reset is required.

Let's illustrate this struggle with a story.

The Sermon They Couldn't Ignore

Pastor Augustus Brown (not his real name) was a sincere man who did his best to practice servant leadership. He taught regularly on the topic, but it seemed to make little difference to his members.

After each sermon they would embrace him warmly and congratulate him on an excellent message: "Pastor, you inspired me this morning, thank you for such a stirring word" But there was little evidence of humble service in the church. Exasperated, he decided to reinforce his message by example.

The church was blessed with a noisy and colourful crew of children. Toilet visits were unsupervised and the boys were in desperate need of squirting training: floods of blessing in the sanctuary, floods of toxic effluent in the loos. A visit to the toilet was a health hazard. Toilet duty was undoubtedly the least popular ministry in the church. And it showed.

seriously. It was merely a political device to unify an ethnically and religiously diverse empire: good politics and nothing more.

One occasion stands out. The Sunday morning service was ablaze, the congregation celebrated God in loud songs of praise, shouts of joy, ecstatic tongues and a whole repertoire of phonetic sounds.

Pastor Augustus sprang into his pulpit to preach. He was on fire and the congregation responded with spontaneous applause and loud cries of “Amen!” “Praise the Lord!” “Glory!” and “Preach it pastor!”

At the conclusion of the sermon, people swarmed forward for prayer and ministry, tears were shed and people dropped to the floor under the ‘anointing’. There was glory in the sanctuary and pastor Augustus was the hero of the hour.

Everything was going to plan until pastor Augustus appeared with a bucket of foaming water and a mop. He was well known for his use of visual aids and his members expected a prophetic utterance Ezekiel style. Instead, he vanished into the toilets.

At first his members thought it was a call of nature, even men of God have these urges, but it soon became apparent that it was nothing of the kind. Pastor Augustus Brown had rolled up his sleeves and was cleaning the toilets. The members’ eyes rolled in horror. What had got into the man?

“No pastor!” yelled the elders, “This is not your task; you’re the pastor.” They tried to wrestle the mop and bucket from him, but he was a big man and held his own.

“If my Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ, can wash feet, I can clean toilets. You’re interfering with my ministry.” They reluctantly retreated, still protesting.

Later there was a church meal. Pastor Augustus Brown slipped into the kitchen and began to help with the washing up. Several members of the catering team attempted to prise the dishcloth from his hands and push him from the sink.

“Pastor Brown, this is not your job!” they scolded. It’s not dignified for the pastor to wash up. Your ministry is leadership and preaching.”

They were a tough and formidable gang of matriarchs, but Pastor Augustus Brown was tougher. “Sisters”, he said, “I see no difference between preaching and washing up; they’re both acts of service. Jesus has called me to serve and that’s what I’m doing.”

Pastor Augustus Brown washed up, dried up, cleaned up and was the last person to leave the kitchen. His behaviour wagged tongues and was regarded as outrageously eccentric, but it had a far greater impact than his preaching.

Servanthood wasn’t just a theory for Pastor Augustus Brown, as it was for most of his members. Like Peter, their cultural ideas of leadership status were so deeply embedded that they reacted against pastor Augustus’ example of Jesus’s servanthood.

What was going on here? A problem that has been repeated throughout Christian history: the conflict between the world's model of hierarchy and status and Jesus's model of sacrifice and servanthood.

To be truly Kingdom people, we need to fully embrace Jesus's teaching and example.

Let's come at this from another angle with a contemporary parable.

The Queen's hat

In the distance at the far end of the High Street blue lights flashed. The blue flashing lights came nearer and grew bigger and bigger and nearer until they transformed into a convoy of cars each with pulsing headlights that lit them up like a Christmas tree. "What's a convoy of cars doing in Camden High Street?" I'll tell you a secret! Someone very important needs the loo. The convoy drew closer and closer and stopped on the corner of Parkway. Men in grey suits with stern faces and broad shoulders, leapt from two big cars and formed a circle round the steps down to the public ladies' loo. Then, ever so sedately, the door of the maroon Rolls Royce, which had been in the middle of the convoy, opened and out stepped a Hat, a modestly tall hat of lemon yellow with a modestly broad brim, under which was a coat of lemon yellow.

Under that modestly tall hat of lemon yellow with a modestly broad brim, and tucked inside the coat of lemon yellow, was a little old lady, but she was not just any little old lady. Guess who she was? You're right! Under the modestly tall hat of lemon yellow with a modestly broad brim it was none other than Queen Elizabeth II herself, the most famous royal in the world. Even queens get caught short every now and then; they're only human after all. And although her Rolls had almost every gadget possible from a toothpick to a basket for her corgis, it didn't have a loo.

The Queen carefully climbed down the stairs holding the rail tightly, disappeared into the loo and was in there for ages. When she finally reappeared and carefully climbed the stairs she was delicately pressing a handkerchief over her twitching nose and her eyes were watering. She looked very unhappy. The loo PONGED! It was like all the vile, disgusting, foul, horrible, rotten pongs in the world rolled into one enormous STINK. "Get me a bucket, some floral cleaner, a mop, a scrubbing brush, a pair of rubber gloves and a large clothes peg," commanded the Queen. Astonished, the Mayor of London, who had been travelling with her in the Rolls, sped off to a local supermarket and returned with all the items.

The Queen removed her coat but kept on that modestly tall hat; she was, after all, the Queen.

Down those steps she went, the peg plugging her famous royal nose, holding the bucket, mop and cleaner. Oh dear me, not even that peg could protect her from the pong. It slipped between the arms of the peg and sneaked into her nostrils and poned everywhere inside her.

Once inside the loo, the queen knelt on the dirty floor and scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed and mopped and mopped and mopped, until that toilet was spotless, gleaming, sparkling and smelling, oh, so sweet, like a garden of perfumed flowers. You wouldn't believe the difference – the PONG had GONE! The Queen took the peg from her nose and the unhappy crinkle from her face and smiled a big bright grandmotherly smile. It was brighter and warmer than all the flashing lights on her cars.

Then, the modestly tall hat of lemon yellow, under which was the little old lady who was the Queen, carefully climbed up the stairs from the Camden Town loo. She had left the bucket, the mop and the floral cleaner behind her so other people could follow her example and clean the loo. She put on her coat of lemon yellow, which matched that hat, and stepped back into her luxurious Rolls Royce with cushions as fluffy and soft as clouds. She sat back in those cushions and gave a long sigh of contentment. The men in grey suits clambered back into their big cars. With blue lights flashing, the convoy returned to Buckingham Palace.

I was Agog!

Amazed!

Astounded!

Embarrassed!

Shocked!

Aghast!

Horrificed!

Speechless!

The little old lady under the modestly tall hat of lemon yellow with a modestly broad brim had cleaned a stinky public loo and banished the pong. She was, after all, the Queen and wore the most expensive crown in the world.

From our experience, your reactions to this story are likely to expose your true attitude to servant leadership. So, let's take a few moments to self-reflect by answering the following questions. You'll also find them in the workbook.

Reflection

- How did you react to the idea of the late Queen Elizabeth II cleaning toilets? Describe your reaction.
 - Do you regard toilet cleaning as an appropriate role for the Queen? Give the reasons for your answer.
 - In your society, what is the equivalent to the Queen cleaning toilets?

- Do you think that there are different rules that apply to the respective leadership practices of Jesus and the Queen? What are the reasons for your answer?
- Survey your answers. What do they teach you about your true attitude to leadership?
- Then reflect on how your attitudes to leadership have evolved into your current leadership style:
 - On whose example have you modelled your leadership style?
 - How have you learned and developed your leadership skills?
 - In what ways does your approach to leadership match the example of Jesus?

Notes

Before the Spotlight

Next, we'll be doing a detective job; tracking down some of the attitudes and motives behind a worldly approach to leadership. These motives and attitudes create character and drive the behaviour of leaders. To assist us in the enquiry, we'll reflect on Matthew 23, a passage that highlights the behaviour and motives of leaders. Significantly, the leaders who feature in this narrative are religious and display traits that are common in Christian leadership today.

Reflections

So, in preparation we recommend that you:

- Summarise the lessons you have already learnt from our study on John 13.
- Carefully read Matthew 23:1-12, identifying the negative and positive traits of leadership that you observe.
- And then summarise any additional lessons that you learn from Matthew 23.

Notes

3. The Seductions of Leadership

What Lies Beneath the Robes?

So far we've joined the disciples at the Last Supper and grappled with the practical significance of Jesus washing their feet. Now we visit another narrative, Matthew 23, in which Jesus scathingly exposes the corrupt motives of religious leaders. It's an uncomfortable read, more a brutal exposé of self-serving and oppressive leadership, than a tactful wrap on the knuckles.

To begin, read Matthew 23:1-36. Specifically focus on the first 12 verses but reference the others.

Reflections

OK, let's take a deeper look at the passage and begin mining it for gold. You'll also find the questions in your workbook where you can record your answers.

- What do you learn from the behaviour of the Scribes and Pharisees?
- Why do you think Jesus reacted so violently to their behaviour?
- In what ways has the passage challenged you regarding your own style of leadership?
This question requires us to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves. We can use the experience of the Scribes and Pharisees as a mirror for own motives and behaviour.

Notes

Ask the students to read and reflect on Matthew 23.

Thrones of Pride and Tombs of Pretense

In Matthew 23, Jesus is in combat mode; he comes out fighting. This is a long way from “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, cuddling a lamb and kissing a child.” His words sizzle on the page. He calls these leaders “whitewashed tombs”, “snakes”, “brood of vipers, “hypocrites” and “blind guides”. There’s no hint of political correctness here; he denounces their behaviour with the most inflammatory invective.

Why this furious outburst?

Everything the Scribes and Pharisees do is self-serving. They are devoutly religious but utterly worldly. The only thing that distinguishes them from their Roman overlords is their birth-heritage and their religious beliefs; their attitudes and drives are identical. The sobering truth is that their religion is merely a camouflage for pride, selfishness and the lust for power and status. No wonder Jesus and the Scribes and Pharisees collide head on. His teaching and example of leadership are the opposite of theirs, there can be no compromise.

So, why does Jesus have such a problem with their behaviour and leadership?

The Scribes and Pharisees were obsessed with rank, title and status. Jesus acknowledges that they sit on ‘Moses’ Seat’, a figurative recognition of teaching authority, similar to the idea of a professorial chair.⁹

If you remember, the Sanhedrin was the Jewish ruling council, presided over by the High Priest. The Scribes and Pharisees saw themselves in direct descent from Moses, as the custodians and teachers of the Law ¹⁰. Jesus doesn’t dispute their succession or the importance of their role as guardians of the Law, but he has serious misgivings about their application of it. His ‘seven woes’ on the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23) are the most devastating indictments of self-serving leadership in world literature.

What was it that infuriated Jesus about the conduct of these leaders?

When Status Replaces Servanthood

The Scribes and Pharisees were more interested in being ‘top dog’ than in service. Jesus says, **“They love the place of honour at feasts and the best seats in the synagogue”**. The

⁹ The front seat in the synagogue was often referred to as “Moses’ Seat” and figuratively refers to teaching authority (similar to our professorial chair) or those responsible for interpreting and applying the Laws of Moses. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Mathew, R.T. France, pp327

¹⁰ The Pirkei Avot, an early Jewish writing, states that Moses received the Law, gave it to Joshua who, in turn, passed it on to the Elders of Israel; the Elders gave it to the Prophets, and the Prophets, to the Great Sanhedrin, the council of 120 elders first convened in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, around 440BC to 300BC.

best seats were those at the front, facing the congregation, comparable to the platform party at a large Christian event. The places of honour at feasts were the reserved seats at the top-table. Smug in their superiority, they dismissed the people as the **“mob who know nothing of the Law,”**¹¹ but still demanded their respect and recognition. There’s a little of the Scribe and Pharisee in all of us.

Pride is an ever-present temptation for leaders. When we succumb to it, we no longer think of ourselves as servants but an elite. From this imperious height, we look down at the people and expect them to serve us. One dangerous feature of elites is the shared delusion that they are better than others and not governed by the rules they impose. The outcome is the creation of a toxic culture which encourages double standards. This was certainly true of many who sat on ‘Moses’ Seat’¹². Jesus attacks this toxic culture, **“They preach but they do not practice.”** They had attached thousands of legal add-ons to the Law, referred to as the ‘Tradition of the Elders’¹³. These defined in minute detail how people should obey the commandments. It’s clear from Jesus’s stinging reprimand that they felt their duty to God was discharged by interpreting and policing the Law rather than practicing it. Jesus is scathing and uses metaphor and irony to expose their inconsistency: **“They tie up heavy cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.”** What a picture!

The Scribes and Pharisees are scurrying around, busily packaging piles of legal precedents and rules and hoisting them on the backs of the people. The weight is crushing, people stagger under the load. Their job done, the Scribes and Pharisees smugly look on. **“The perfect Law that brings freedom”**¹⁴ has been turned into an unbearable, graceless servitude. Their behaviour is the antithesis of Jesus’s servant-heartedness.

Obsessed with legal minutiae, they have missed the point of God’s Law altogether. Jesus quips, **“You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.”**

The tragedy of the Scribes and Pharisees is that they use the Law to nullify the Law. By giving legal trivia priority, they lose sight of the most important matters of the Law: justice, mercy and faithfulness. Similarly, we as leaders can justify our office by prioritising tradition, position and trivia over the more important aspects of our faith: servanthood, Christlikeness and humility.

Let’s remember, there’s a little of the Scribe and Pharisee in all of us.

¹¹ John 7:49

¹² The front seat in the synagogue was often referred to as “Moses’ Seat”. It was a figurative expression for teaching authority and those officially responsible for teaching and applying the Law of Moses. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Matthew, F.T.France, pp327

¹³ Matthew 15:2-6; Mark 7:3-13; Galatians 1:14.

¹⁴ James 1:25

Dressing for Applause

The Scribes and Pharisees are religious showmen. Religion is the catwalk on which they parade their piety. Jesus remarks, **“Everything they do is done for people to see.”** and comments acerbically, **“They make their phylacteries wide and their tassels long”**. The phylactery is a leather box, attached to the forehead, with four compartments, each containing a passage from the Torah¹⁵. The tassels were worn on the four corners of a man’s outer garment¹⁶ and served as a reminder to obey the Law. The Scribes and Pharisees turned these into a flamboyant publicity stunt. Enlarging their phylacteries and lengthening their tassels, they projected an image of superior piety and devotion to the Law.

The religion of the Scribes and Pharisees was a facade that concealed hypocrisy, greed, worldly ambition and self-centredness. For them, leadership was a job with perks. These included the best seats at feasts and in synagogues, status titles, respectful greetings in the marketplace and often the wealth and power to command people. No wonder Jesus referred to them as **“whitewashed tombs full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean”**.

Fixated on externals, they lacked self-awareness. They championed the Law but never allowed it to judge and change them. This double standard was a fault-line that ran through their lives. They wore their religion like costumes in a vaudeville show. Dressed to impress, their performance was nothing more than bling to dazzle the people.

The performance has a contemporary ring. There’s a danger that we, as Church leaders, can be more in love with the role than the Lord. It’s as if the church is a stage and we’re the principal actors. The theatre of ministry, with all its trappings and aesthetics, becomes more important than humble service. We love stardom more than the Saviour, patronising Him but reluctant to follow His servant example. How much of our piety is for God and how much for show? There’s a little of the Scribe and Pharisee in all of us.

From Jesus’s description of them, it’s clear that the Scribes and Pharisees shared the same traits. He threw them all into the same barrel. The old proverb, ‘one rotten apple spoils the barrel’, is certainly true here. Rottenness became the norm – “If we all do it, it must be OK.” Peer conformity and approval are the endorsement for bad practice. The outcome of this is a toxic culture driven by values contrary to the Kingdom of God. Jesus was the whistle blower.

Admittedly, our culture influences our leadership practice but a more sinister force is at work: the depravity of the human heart. Conformity to the peer group is not exclusive to the Scribes and Pharisees. We’ve seen it used by church leaders to justify group adultery, paedophilia, fraud and deliberate nepotism. The morality and behaviour of the group becomes the accepted norm. Often our desire for peer acceptance becomes more important than loyalty to Christ and His Word. By conforming to peer pressure, we can be complicit in behaviours and attitudes that are a denial of Jesus’s teaching.

¹⁵ Ex 13:1-10, Exodus 13 11-16, Deut. 6:4-9 and Deut. 11:13-21.

¹⁶ Numbers 15:37-41, Deut. 22:12

It's a chilling reminder that peer conformity led to the gruesome murder of the Messiah.

Acceptance by our peer group is often integral to our identity. For the Scribes' and Pharisees', identity and self-worth were also dependent on their role. Like them, our sense of self-worth and identity can be derived from the status and power of our role and not from who we are in Christ. Remove our role and our identity collapses. When it's unrecognised or challenged, we feel threatened, even attacked. No wonder the confusion of identity and role results in insecurity and stress. Jesus's teaching on servanthood deals with this problem at root.

The Spectacle of Grace

Leadership is not a role-play but a divine call to imitate Christ and to be the slave of all. A slave has nothing else to lose - no role, no status, no power. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul graphically describes the realities of servant leadership. This is not a passage we'd readily add to our CV. The image Paul uses is of a Roman triumph. The star of the procession is the victorious General, applauded and adored by the crowds. However, the Christian leader is not represented by the victorious general but the prisoners-of-war who stumble along at the rear of the procession and receive the taunts of the citizens of Rome:

'For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We've been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honoured, we are dishonoured! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We've become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.'

A word of caution! Servanthood is not self-negation, the denial of our unique personhood and gifts, but the recognition that all we possess has been given to us by God and should be poured out to him in service. Admittedly, this is not an easy thing for any of us, but God has given his Word to guide us and the Holy Spirit to change us. There's nothing more unattractive than leaders whose lips profess Christ but their lives deny him.

Reflection

Now we've come to a decisive point in the training of the disciples, and this is also a critical point for us.

So, with the help of the following questions, it's time to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves.

- In the light of what we've learnt about the Scribes and Pharisees, what have you discovered about your motives for leadership?

To help you answer this question consider how important the following are to you

(rank each on scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'not at all important to you' and 5 is 'very important to you'):

- Role and rank (position in the church hierarchy)
 - Title (a badge of rank, honour and authority)
 - Status (the recognition and kudos associated with position)
 - Power (ability to command others to achieve objectives)
 - Authority (the right to command)
 - Influence (the capacity to affect outcomes through relationship, counsel and persuasion).
- On a scale of 1 to 5, how closely is your identity and self-worth dependent on your role? (1 is complete dependence and 5 is complete independence.)
 - If your self-identity is dependent upon your role, identify the reasons for it and the remedial steps you will take.
 - How have your values and behaviour been influenced by your peers and the culture of your team or church network?
 - How do these influences compare to Kingdom values?

If you have the courage, using these same questions, ask two or three trusted and truthful people to share their opinion of you.

How did your self-assessment match their view of you?

Notes

Thrones and Thunder: The Servant Way Redefined

So, now we'll be a 'fly-on-the-wall' and listen-in to James' and John's secret meeting with Jesus. Goaded by their mum, they decide to 'steal a march' on the other disciples by requesting the top spots in the Kingdom. We'll witness the outrage of the other disciples and see how Jesus handles the situation.

It's a simple, straightforward story that uses an economy of language, but it has the same effect as a great painting - the more we look, the more we see.

First, please read and reflect on the incident recounted in Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-43. Record your observations about the outlook and attitudes of the protagonists in the story.

Notes

When Ambition Meets the Cross

Salome, the mother of James and John, is ambitious for her boys. As Mary's sister¹⁷, it's likely that she regards Jesus as a 'family business' and believes that her boys deserve preferential treatment. Family comes first!

James and John have inherited their mother's feisty temperament. The brothers are spiked with an overdose of testosterone. No wonder Jesus nicknamed them, 'Sons of Thunder'. As relatives of the Messiah, they've already decided that they should sit on his right and left in the Kingdom. Kings always favour trusted family members. Why should Jesus be any different? Nepotism rules the world, so why not in Messiah's kingdom?

We can imagine the conversation between the boys and their mum. Let's listen in:

"Mum, you talk to Jesus for us. You're his aunt. When he was little you even changed his nappies. He's very fond of you; he'll listen."

"Alright boys, as long as you back me up. Don't say anything unless I give you a nod. Be respectful. Remember, he may be your cousin but he's also the Messiah. Don't contradict him; agree with anything he says and be on your best behaviour." She sniffs, her face puckers. "Boys, you stink of fish. Go and have a bath and change your clothes and then we'll go and see him."

The boys have never looked better. Following mum's instructions, they'd scrubbed vigorously with olive oil soap, untangled their matted hair, trimmed their beards and are wearing their Sabbath best. "You look the part," she says and beams with pride: "Boys, you're fit for the top seats in his Kingdom."

As Salome approaches Jesus, the boys look at each other and grin; their self-confident and bossy mum morphs into a humble suppliant. Her eyes lower modestly, head and shoulders stoop in a show of meekness and submission, so unlike her; her stride is suddenly demure and faltering. She stoops and kneels at Jesus's feet. But he is not taken in by the show. He laughs. He knows her too well.

"What is it you want, aunt?" and his glance includes her boys.

Their intuition is instant: "He knows!" but Salome is oblivious. Her eyes are on the prize.

"Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your Kingdom."

The question hangs between them; Salome and her boys wait expectantly. He speaks, "You don't know what you're asking."

"Of course we do!" but they stamp on the exclamation and keep silent.

¹⁷ Most scholars deduce from the Biblical evidence that Salome was Mary's sister and Jesus' aunt.

Jesus qualifies his statement with a question: “Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptised with?”

James and John brashly brush aside Jesus’s question without giving it thought. In their imagination, they’re already seated on his right and left in the Kingdom: “We can,” they say and their mum echoes their words, “They can. They can.”

Jesus brings them crashing down to earth: “You will indeed drink from my cup and be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with, but to sit at my right and left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my father.” It takes a few seconds for the words to sink in. His statement is a ‘sucker-punch’, totally unexpected.

They’re winded, deflated and seem to shrink. No guarantee of top seats in the Kingdom, but the promise they’ll share the cup he is destined to drink.

After the resurrection it all made sense. They aspired to a throne; he offered them a cross. He took their request for self-advancement and redirected it into a lifetime of selfless service. Crowns in His Kingdom come by way of the cross and are cast at his feet in humble devotion. They will certainly share his cup of suffering, but reward is the Father’s business.

“Not So with You”: The Servant King's Challenge

In a close rural community, little remains secret for long: whispers become shouts, secrets, common knowledge. The other disciples soon learn of the brothers’ duplicity: “These scoundrels have tried to get ‘one up on us’! How dare they go behind our backs and use the family connection to seize the best seats in the Kingdom.”

Ironically, given half-a-chance, each of them would have clambered over the others to get to the top. As we have seen previously, the disciples have been brought up in a culture of masters and subordinates and they’ve never thought to question it. These ideas have shaped their view of the Messiah. He is the ultimate Marvel-strongman who will topple Rome and elevate the nation to the world’s premiere ‘superpower’. In Jesus, the twelve disciples believe they’ve hit the jackpot. As his inner circle, they expect him to lift them from insignificant Galilean fishermen to the Lords of the new age.

Jesus calls ‘team time’. He’s aware of their wrong attitudes and confronts them head on: **“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.”**

The disciples nod enthusiastically. Jesus appears to be affirming their idea of leadership. But it’s a perfect set-up. Just when they think that Jesus is finally making sense, Whack, he delivers his knockout blow: **“Not so with you.”**

The stark rebuttal leaves them reeling, **“Not so with you.”** Once again, Jesus turns their thinking upside-down:

“Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Why, after all Jesus’s teaching on servanthood, do the disciples react in this way?

Three years of tuition by the world’s greatest teacher and exemplar of servanthood has made very little practical difference to their thinking. The worldly view of leadership is so embedded in the disciples’ minds that it has become their default programme. It is here that the fiercest conflict is being fought. As long as they superimpose their worldly notions of leadership on Jesus, they will never make sense of his mission and kingship.

It takes the Crucifixion and Resurrection to shatter their misconceptions and allow them to see their Master clearly: he is the Servant King who came to “serve and give his life as a ransom for many”. All those who follow him must follow his example of servanthood.

Still Blind: The Church’s Struggle with Servant Leadership

Today, we can view the disciples’ competitive spirit and rivalry with a smug superiority, yet be guilty of the very same attitudes. Let’s face it, for 2000 years the Church has struggled with servant leadership.

The Kingdom of God is so radical and counter-cultural that we instinctively dismiss Jesus’s teaching as unworkable, neutralise it with theological spin or simply fail to understand it. We can be as blind as the disciples. The outcome is often the same: we base our practice of Christian leadership on secular models. Consequently, our churches can be little more than sub-cultures, imitating worldly forms of leadership and conforming to its standards.

How then can we be true to Christ’s servant-hearted example of leadership?

The values and behaviour of leaders have a significant effect upon the character and behaviour of a church. Next, we’ll look at the interaction between a leader’s values and the culture of their church.

Reflection

Please answer the following questions and compare your answers to those you gave to questions in earlier sessions.

Note and record the development in your thinking.

- Reflect on your personal leadership style. On a scale of 1 to 10, identify how close to Jesus you are in his leadership style and practice (where 1 is not at all like Jesus and 10 is very much like him).
- What are the inhibitors in you and your church that stop you practising servant leadership?
- Identify your leadership practises **which do and do not** reflect genuine Jesus inspired servanthood.

- Do you regard your team members as subordinates who serve your goals, or people whom you invest in and encourage to fulfil their potential and use their gifts in service to others?
- What positive steps can you take to grow as a servant leader and encourage servanthood in your team?
- How can you inspire your church to grow as a servant-hearted community?
- What do you think are the benefits of servant leadership? List these benefits in your workbook.

Notes

4. How Leadership Behaviour Creates Church Culture

The Hidden Architects of Church Culture

There is a cluster of traits and behaviours that reveal a leader's true values and establish the actual 'culture' of a church. 'Culture', in this context, describes the accepted priorities, values and behaviours that create the character of a church. This may seem a little abstract so we'll illustrate with a story from our experience. Once again, we disguise the identities of the church and the people involved.

When a Leader's Ego Shapes a Church

The Reverend Coleman Hunt was obsessive about expository preaching. Academically inclined, he believed that his calling was to encourage Biblical literacy. He was a shy, introspective man and public speaking didn't come naturally to him, but his retiring, self-effacing persona hid fierce ambition, a towering ego and a ruthless determination to eliminate any rivals who could potentially overshadow him. He was a minister and he guarded his pulpit and position with all the savagery of a warlord garrisoning his fortress against neighbouring foes. Determined to succeed, he worked hard and established a reputation as an acceptable Bible teacher.

Since its inception, the church had prioritised local evangelism and community action, but under Hunt's leadership the church evolved into a lecture theatre and, the services, Biblical tutorials. The students from the neighbouring theological college loved it, but for most local people the teaching was about as relevant to their daily lives as a course in ancient Middle Eastern history: fine exposition but little practical application.

Hunt was determined that his Biblical teaching should have a much wider audience. Consequently, he directed the church to invest in state-of-the-art broadcast equipment and trained media personnel. He purchased premium slots on Christian TV and used church resources to promote his teaching on social media. The leaders and workers he favoured were those sympathetic to his values and helped achieve his goals.

In his church, there was a highly gifted evangelist with a respected international ministry. Dr Maria Koska had a PhD and specialised in the Gospel and popular culture, but her stress on local evangelism didn't fit with Hunt's agenda.

Koska's emphasis, however, was in perfect harmony with the church's mission statement. Moreover, she had a track record in local evangelism and, with her team, had led many people to Christ, most of whom were now active church members. Hunt's agenda for a wider TV ministry had drawn resources away from local mission. In his attempt to build an international reputation as a Bible expositor, he had

disconnected from local people. Opinion in his own congregation was divided: some applauded the new direction, delighted that their pastor was a rising TV star; others were concerned that the church was becoming irrelevant to the local community. All was not well in the kingdom of Hunt. He'd intentionally redefined the mission of the church by redirecting most of its resources to Bible exposition and his own media exposure.

Evangelism became the Cinderella of the church.

Dr Koska and likeminded individuals were loyal people and struggled on in the church. Starved of resources, they were side-lined and scandalously parodied as marketing people whose approach to the Gospel and evangelism was shallow and cheapened the grace of God. Ultimately, they had no alternative but to leave. Hunt's example and the enforcement of his priorities had dramatically changed the culture of the church and defined who was 'in' and who was 'out'.

The Impact of Leader's Behaviour

The impact of a leader's behaviour is well documented. Edgar Schein, an authority on culture and leadership, observed characteristics and behaviours of leaders that impact their organisations.¹⁸

We've wrestled with Schein's material and asked the question, "How relevant is this to the church? Are his observations theologically valid or are we merely presenting a secular philosophy in a Christian guise?" Our conclusion is that Schein, an astute observer and chronicler of human behaviour, has something to say to the church.

Our experience of Christian leadership confirms many of his findings. We have been driven to conclude by repeated experience that rich seams of gold (positive traits) and fault lines (negative traits) in the church can be traced back to the leadership.

Unless there is humility on the part of leaders and a willingness to self-reflect and change, a fault line can do long-term and even irreparable damage to a church and bury any 'seams of gold' under the rubble.

We are now going to examine five leadership behaviours.

It is imperative that leaders are sufficiently self-aware to see how they play out in their own leadership. With constant surveillance, these behaviours can become seams of gold that enrich the church.

When answering the questions in each section, we recommend that you involve a trusted friend who has seen you operate in leadership and will comment honestly on your answers.

¹⁸ Organisational Culture and Leadership, Jossey Bass

The Leader's Allocation of Resources

The first trait we'll look at is the Leader's Allocation of Resources.

The proof of a leader's priorities (what's really important to them) can be measured by his or her allocation of time, resources, personnel and the distribution of money. As we have seen in the Coleman Hunt story, the stated priority is community evangelism but little money is directed towards it. Instead, the pastor's true priority is the promotion of his ministry as a Bible teacher. Consequently, he invests money in state-of-the-art media technology.

When projects are out of sync with the stated values and priorities of the church it opens a rift, a fault-line, that sends a strong message to the congregation: their priorities and actions must align with those of the leader. Members with ministries that fail to advance the leaders priorities and goals are often marginalised, under resourced and their contributions overlooked. This was the experience of Maria Koska and her team.

This situation is reinforced by a false paradigm that relies more on church tradition than Scripture: the vision and goals of the local church are set by the leader alone and everyone else must follow. As we have already noted, the leader must be a servant; the church is not the leader's fiefdom but Christ's living body under his rule and tutelage. As such, Christ directs his body through the gifts and ministries of the many and not the one. Therefore, the use of resources should not reflect the ambition of the leader but the Father's equipping of the saints for works of ministry and application of Biblical priorities. This approach, facilitated by the servant leader, utilises the discernment, spiritual wisdom, gifts and experience of the congregation.

Wisely distributed, resources can be a critical element in the growth and unity of the church, a seam of gold. A servant leader needs to consider the effect that a change in allocated resources will have on the affected people.

Reflection

Let's apply this to ourselves with the help of the following questions:

- What does your allocation of resources tell others about your true values?
- Assess the relationship between your true values and the stated values of the church. How closely are they aligned?
- Review the initiatives you promote and consider the impact of your choices on people in the church. What do you learn from this?

Notes

The People the Leader Favours

The second trait we'll look at is the People the Leader Favours: The type of person a leader recruits and rewards, reinforces the culture of a church.

It is well attested that people gravitate to others like themselves. Consequently, leaders have a tendency, deliberate or unconscious, to favour people of similar background, character, outlook, values and ethnicity to themselves. This stamps the leader's image on the church.

To understand this, we'll use the analogy of a singer. The singer is a baritone and only auditions baritones for his backing vocalists. If a vocalist is not a baritone, however talented, he is confronted with a dilemma. Should he be true to himself and his gifts, sing bass, and risk exclusion? Or should he conform, take a few lessons from a voice coach, and try to sing baritone? In order to be accepted in a culture where baritones rule, sopranos, bass and tenors do their best to become baritones.

This unwitting tendency to choose people like us is understandable. It reduces the chance of personality clashes, challenges to authority and disagreements over theology and strategy. Uniformity is often confused with true Christian unity.

Gifted and mature men and women of God who do not conform to type can be excluded - only baritones are welcome. Weak and domineering leaders will deliberately follow this path, regarding dissent as an obstacle to their goals and vision. When 'baritones' alone are acceptable the rich diversity of voices is lost.

Let us insert a warning: this trait is a dangerous fault line.

Professor Scott Page, a world-renowned authority on team behaviour, has statistically analysed teams and shown that diversity is a critical factor in their success¹⁹. The evidence proves that a diverse team is far more effective. In the language of our analogy, a vocal ensemble that comprises the entire tonal range is infinitely better than one with baritones alone.

The principle of 'preferring people like us' is also reflected in the leader's recognition and reward of members. The rewards can be quite subtle: people with an acceptable profile will be publicly acknowledged and affirmed. This is toxic, encouraging nepotism and the rejection of those who fail to conform to type. Baritones are banished!

The Scriptural model is radically different. Diversity is celebrated in the New Testament. We enter a new Kingdom in which unity is expressed in glorious diversity - bass, sopranos, tenors and baritones are all celebrated and welcomed.

¹⁹ The Diversity Bonus: *How Great Teams Pay Off in the Knowledge Economy*, Princetown University Press

Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on the things we have just discussed and consider the following questions:

- Do you choose people because of their conformity to your views and values or their capability?
 - Do you prefer to work with people of a similar personality type to you? Give reasons.
 - What do you learn about yourself from the people you choose, affirm and reward?
- Reflect on the people you choose, affirm and reward. How do your choices affect the church?

Notes

The Things that Command the Leader's Attention

The next trait we'll look at is the Things that command a leader's attention.

A leader's values and what he or she prioritises are trumpeted by the emphasis and attention given to them. The church responds by focusing on these and they become embedded in its culture. This effect is inevitable and can have either a negative or positive outcome.

In the story, Hunt publicly broadcasts his priorities by focussing on expository preaching and his media presence. In contrast another church leader may trumpet his priorities by regularly meeting with the leaders of his preferred ministries and activities and ignoring others. This sends a clear message: these are the things that require the attention and effort of the church.

A potential fault-line is caused when the leader's personal objectives and values are made the church's top priority. Unity is understood in terms of the willingness of members to sing the leader's song. This sets a very harmful and unscriptural precedent with destructive repercussions: all songs are muted except the leader's own.

In the story, all Hunt's attention was diverted to his personal goals; evangelism and Maria Koska the evangelist, were dismissed as of no value. Hunt was determined that his song, and his song alone, should define his church.

Positively, this dynamic becomes a seam of gold when the leader deliberately highlights and reinforces ministries that advance the agreed direction of the church. This is illustrated by another story from our archive; identities are again disguised.

Empowered to Flourish: Leadership That Listens and Lifts

Pastor Jonathan Patterson became the pastor of The City Temple, a failing city centre church in the north of England. The vision of the church to reach the city had been lost and it was drifting without purpose, like a ship without a rudder; leaders and members were demoralised.

Patterson, a strategic thinker, recognised that without co-workers he could do very little. Consequently, he set himself to revive the leadership and create a synergistic team.

The City Temple's mission statement was formulated in the church's glory days. Patterson was not motivated by personal ambition and made the mission statement his mandate. It prioritised mission, Biblical discipleship, fellowship and responsible pastoral care. Secure enough to recognise that he had no monopoly on ministry gifts, Patterson deliberately encouraged key ministries in the church, even those in which he was not directly involved. His presence and interest trumpeted their importance and sent morale 'through the roof'.

As a consequence, the ministry teams felt valued and empowered and buzzed with energy and purpose. The church flourished. Soon a failing, directionless church had

been turned into a dazzling lighthouse for the city – when local people talked about ‘church’, they only meant one church, the City Temple.

Reflection

In our experience, leaders rarely think about the impact on the church of the things they favour and to which they pay attention. The following questions will help you reflect on this and identify the things you pay attention to, and the influence this has on your church or organisation.

- Describe in your own words the behavioural differences between the leader’s attention to favoured ministries and the application of resources to them. What effect does each have on the church?
- In the context of your church or ministry, what do you value and personally prioritise?
 - What effect does this have on those you lead?
 - On what basis do you decide which ministries and activities are worthy of your attention?
 - What effect does this have on those concerned and the wider congregation?
- After answering these questions, are there any changes you need to make? What is your action plan?

Notes

The Things the Leader Models and Teaches

The fourth aspect we'll look at are the things the leader models and teaches.

A leader's example is critically important because it conveys their actual values regardless of what they claim. Indeed, values are not ornaments displayed in an antiques cabinet but are fleshed out in the nitty gritty of daily life. When stated values are not reflected in the leader's behaviour, people ignore their instructions and choose instead to follow their example.

What we model, therefore, has a greater impact on the church than what we say. A disconnect between word and action undermines a leader's integrity and authority. It broadcasts, "My words don't really matter; as your leader, I'll do as I please." This is often a subliminal message, but not always.

One leader known to us, confessed, "As the pastor of the church, I shouldn't be governed by the rules I make for my members. I should be free to do what I want."²⁰ He believed that his role as leader permitted him to transcend any accountability for his actions and was blind to the practical and spiritual consequences.

Sadly, during 50 years of ministry, we have seen variations of this attitude used to justify everything from sexual promiscuity to despotic nepotism. Double standards result in a confused, discordant and demoralised church. Faced with such leadership inconsistency, people react in different ways:

- Some deliberately choose to ignore the pastor's inconsistencies. This is often justified by an argument lifted from the Israelite monarchy. The King was regarded as "The Lord's Anointed" and therefore the representative of God's rule and authority. The role of the pastor is understood in similar terms. To question the pastor, therefore, is regarded as an act of rebellion. A variation on this argument is that the pastor is the appointed leader and the church should submit uncritically.
- Others will use the leader's behaviour as an excuse for misconduct: "The pastor does it and so do I".
- Yet others, aware of the leader's inconsistencies, will cut their own path by applying their own values.

This is where the application of Schein's secular principles, and those of many leadership gurus, breakdown. In the church, the human leader is not the primary model. Christ is the head and his example and teaching allow us to distinguish seams of gold from fault lines. Consequently, the leader's example shouldn't have the same force in the church as it does in secular organisations. Jesus and his Word are our chief guide and example; we follow in his footsteps. It is his song and his song alone that should set the culture of the Church.

²⁰ This comment is not fictitious or based on hearsay but has been said to us as justifications of deviant behaviour.

Reflection

Have you ever considered the impact of your example on those you lead?

The following questions will help you address this challenge.

- Does your behaviour align with your publicly stated values?
- How do the members of your church react to your example? Give examples.
- How can you ensure your behaviour and stated values are aligned? What steps will you take?
- How can you introduce accountability to help you maintain alignment between your stated values and behaviour?

Notes

The Leader's Response to Critical Incidents

Lastly, we will consider the leader's response to critical incidents.

In normal circumstances, our behaviour is a fairly reliable guide to our adopted values, but our true values are often exposed during critical incidents. In crisis, we react reflexively without consideration. These are called 'moments of truth'.

A Biblical example of this is Peter's reaction when *he was identified as a follower of Jesus after the Lord's betrayal and arrest*. Hours earlier, he had vowed never to publicly disown Jesus, *yet when challenged about his association with him*, he denied any knowledge of his Lord.

What was happening here?

His avowal of loyalty to Jesus was sincere and well meant; he embraced fully the value of loyalty and was distressed when Jesus predicted his denial, yet, when threatened with exposure as a follower of Jesus, his reflexive reaction overrode his stated value. Self-preservation was a more compelling value than sacrificial loyalty. This was his 'moment of truth', the moment when Peter met himself (See Appendix 1: The Man Who Met Himself)

A word of caution! 'Moments of truth' need to be distinguished from the emotional trauma triggered, for example, by personal tragedy. The person who receives news of the sudden death of a loved one will react dramatically. *It's a bomb that, when detonated, results in intense emotional trauma*. The ensuing emotional volatility is not an expression of values but the natural reaction to pain and loss.

Values are often the clothes that we wear to make us acceptable to our peer group. As such they are disposable and easily exchanged depending upon the company we keep. In the church, there are behaviours that are considered normal, even if they reflect cultural rather than Scriptural preferences. In such circumstances, values can be determined by church etiquette and there is a subtle pressure to conform.

'Moments of truth' strip away these superficial clothes and expose the leader's true self and motivations. Therefore, they can provide a more reliable guide to the true values of a leader than his or her conduct in less stressful circumstances. Repeated 'moments of truth' focus and magnify any disparity between the leader's stated values and behaviour. The response of the leader at such times can be the example that others will follow: 'Actions speak louder than words.'

Reflection

It is important to learn from our experience.

What do we learn about ourselves from our 'moments of truth'?

It is easy to dismiss them without drawing out the lessons they teach about ourselves and our values.

The following questions will help you rise to this challenge:

- Reflect on your 'moment of truth' experiences and record what they tell you about your true values?
- Our seams of gold and fault-lines are publicly exposed during these critical moments. If the true measure of a person is revealed in times of crisis, how can we ensure that it is only seams of gold that are displayed? This question will involve serious prayer and self-reflection.

Two supplementary questions are vital in this exercise:

- Do your values accord with Scripture and the teaching and example of Jesus?
- How can we turn these values into ones which will transform us inwardly and change our reactions?

Write down your responses and discuss with your trusted friend.

Notes

Discovering Seams of Gold

The five spheres of a leader's influence we have highlighted can either be seams of gold or fault lines. Our style of leadership should be a glittering seam of gold reflecting Christ's servant-hearted character. Such leaders will inevitably transform the ethos and atmosphere of a church.

To truly benefit from this session, we recommend that you memorise the five behaviours and record what have you learnt about yourself. Use them frequently as a checklist to review your leadership style. It is important to note, that these are not the only characteristics of a servant-hearted leader.

5. Flawed Leadership Models

Majestic Humility: A Portrait of Servant Leadership

We will begin this session by reading one of the most amazing passages in the New Testament: Philippians 2:3-11.

This passage is the magnum opus on the character and servanthood of Christ. Many scholars suggest the passage was a hymn used in the liturgy of the early church. Huge ideas are compressed into a few words. These create a vibrant portrait of Jesus, a majestic miniature masterpiece, panoramic in its vision: The eternal One who is in the very 'form' of God assumed the 'form' of a slave; the highest of all chose to become the lowest. As a man and servant, Jesus laid aside the privileges of his position and chose to live in obedience to the Father and give his life in sacrifice for our redemption. Consequently, the Father exalted Jesus to the Lordship of the universe and gave him 'the name that is above every name'. The exalted Lord is our Servant King. Follow in his footsteps and he will reshape your outlook and radically transform your leadership.

This passage deserves to be memorised; it's sheer dynamite! And we need to prayerfully think through its implications, or its message will be lost.

Reflections

So, take a little time to pray and reflect on it. Then answer the following questions and jot down your responses in the workbook:

- What does this passage tell you about Jesus?
- What do you learn about leadership from this passage?
- What challenges do you take from this passage regarding your leadership?

Generally, when people answer these questions, they discover an inconsistency between Christ's example of leadership and their experience of leadership in the church, so we have a final question for you:

- What steps will you take to imitate Christ's example in your life and leadership?

Notes

Leadership in the Wrong Image

Before we dig deeper into the passage and mine its seams of gold, let's reflect on various styles of leadership prevalent in the church. These are widespread and have been established over years with uncritical acceptance.

Our experience in churches has led us to a disturbing conclusion: their structures, values and leadership practices are frequently modelled on those in the prevailing culture and not the Kingdom. This tendency is rarely deliberate. Our thinking is unconsciously programmed by our culture and becomes our default setting. When we read Scripture, the influence of our culture is so compelling that, without realising, it 'overwrites' the Word of God. For example, in a country with autocratic leadership as its accepted norm, a seminary professor was forced to rely on the Old Testament to justify this style of church leadership. He argued that the pastor should incorporate the roles of:

- Priest to mediate God's forgiveness;
- prophet, to declare God's word;
- sage, to impart God's wisdom;
- and king, to deliver God's rule.²¹

Although sincere, he unwittingly reversed Jesus' teaching on servant leadership, and the Church as his body.

The result? A fusion of paternalism and autocracy: the pastor towers over the people bending low to feed them, but also appears in the guise of a benevolent Chief Executive who rules the members and expects them to fulfil the goals of his ministry. The servant leader is reinvented as a corporate boss and, in some cultures, the reigning monarch. This is a false paradigm, clumsily imposed on and firmly rejected by the New Testament.

In the West, with dominant corporations and companies, the prevailing culture is hierarchical and departmental. In such societies, Christian thinking is programmed by corporate experience and training. Church members are distanced from power and decision making and are regarded as a subordinate workforce. In this pattern of church life, two ideas converge: rank and recruitment.

- Power and authority are delegated downwards from the leader.
- Ministry roles are designed to advance the goals and vision of the leader or leadership team.

What are the implications of this style of leadership? People are recruited to fill slots and achieve centrally managed goals.

²¹ John E Johnson, 'The Old Testament Offices as a Paradigm for Pastoral Identity' quoted in Roy B Buck's, *Vital Church Issues*, Kregel, 1998, p122

For those of us with a corporate mindset, this system seems perfectly reasonable; it's the way we do it. The fatal flaw in the system is that it replaces the body of Christ with a corporate structure that neutralises the gifts of people. It's here that we need a radical shift in our thinking. The church is not a corporation but a living, dynamic and growing organism, imbued with the Spirit of Jesus. ²²Every member is **'a masterpiece created in Christ Jesus to do good works'** and has a unique calling and gift.

Church leaders are not CEOs but 'SJs' - Servants of Jesus Christ. They are to lead as servants, charged with the care and growth of members and the encouragement of their gifts and ministries in service. Leaders, therefore, should not be a 'cork in the bottle', obstructing the people's growth and the development of their gifts.

In both African and oriental cultures, the natural leadership model is often a tribal monarchy or family patriarchy. This directly influences the leadership style of the church. The pastor is often referred to as 'Father' and expects obedience and respect. In one of London's megachurches, the pastor castigated his congregation for their failure to send him Father's Day cards. He remonstrated angrily, "If I'm your spiritual father, where's your respect and honour? My colleagues in the ministry tell me that hundreds of their members routinely send them Father's Day cards with loving notes of appreciation, but you, you send me nothing!" He 'cracked the whip' and scolded. Before this furious tirade, his congregation sat silent and shame faced, cringing with embarrassment. Dad was giving them a good spanking.

The Shepherd's Revolution

When David wrote Psalm 23 it was a radically counter-cultural depiction of divine leadership and, by inference, all human leadership. It reinforces the biblical idea of servant leadership.

Take a moment to read the Psalm.

In both Old and New Testament times, the culture of the Ancient Middle East was patriarchal and monarchical. Kings were often regarded as divine and ruled their subjects with a rod of iron.

Today, the Psalm challenges patriarchal, presidential and 'corporate' societies. God is depicted as neither a CEO nor an autocrat with a whip but a shepherd with a staff who tenderly leads his flock. We recite the Psalm and sing the hymn but the significance of the words often fails to register.

The shepherd doesn't command his sheep to sow grass seed, mow the lawn and dig reservoirs but leads them to green pastures and tranquil waters. Indeed, he leads from the front by example rather than compulsion. Note, there are no sheep dogs snapping at the heels of the sheep and enforcing compliance.

The sheep follow him because they know he cares for them and has their best interests at heart. This idea underlies the role of pastor/elder in the New Testament and is one of the

²² Ephesians 2:9

most evocative and compelling descriptions of the Lord Jesus. Indeed, it constitutes a key part of Christ's self-identity and understanding of his role and mission: **"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep"**²³.

Peter, in the 5th chapter of his First Epistle, combines the shepherd and servant roles in his portrayal of Jesus. He exhorts the elders of the church to emulate the example of Jesus as the 'Great Shepherd' and selflessly care for his flock. He then encourages both the young men and the elders to humility with a reference to Jesus clothing himself as a slave to wash his disciples feet: **'All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another'** ²⁴.

Evidently Jesus' symbolic gesture left a permanent imprint on Peter. He tackles a potential conflict at its root: young men tend to believe they know it all and are often dismissive of their elders; elders can be equally obnoxious, believing that their seniority gives them superior wisdom, authority and status. Jesus, as servant and shepherd, stands between them and points the way to true leadership.

Inspired by Jesus's example, Peter puts things in perspective: The elders are not to exploit their role for personal glory but lay it aside in order to receive **'the crown of glory that will never fade away'**.²⁵

Similarly, young men should not be arrogant and glory in the pride of youth but humble themselves **'under God's mighty hand that he might lift [them] up in due time'**.²⁶

Leaders, both young and old, should live with their eyes fixed on eternity and the glory to come at the return of the Chief Shepherd. A question for you - Where are you looking for approval and reward? This world or the next?

Christ's Canvas: Painted in his Image

Turning back to Philippians 2:6-11, there's a danger that the passage highlighting the divinity, mission and exaltation of Jesus, can be prised out of context. Instead of being a portrait that inspires our behaviour, it's removed from its frame in Christian living and rehung in a gallery called 'theology'.

Certainly, this passage is worthy of vigorous theological reflection, but Paul didn't include it in his letter for that reason. He deliberately hangs this portrait of Jesus before us to inspire selfless service and obedience: 'in your relationships with one-another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus'.

As the definitive image of God, Jesus displays in his human life, God's gold-standard for all people. We, as Christians, are to be his image bearers, our characters constantly maturing as the Spirit transforms us into his likeness.

²³ John 10:11

²⁴ 1 Peter 5:5

²⁵ 1 Peter 5:4

²⁶ 1 Peter 5:6

The 'portrait of Jesus' is a useful analogy. Christ, as divine and human, is both the definitive portrait of God and the perfect human being. The Spirit makes each of us a canvas on which he skilfully paints the portrait of Christ. With deft strokes of his brush, the Holy Spirit retains our individuality but melds our uniqueness with the beauty of Christ. This process results in the gradual transformation of our thinking, attitudes and outlook; an experience that Paul describes in the Philippian's passage as having the 'mind of Christ' and in Ephesians as 'putting on Jesus.

In Galatians 5, we're encouraged to behave like Jesus and display the fruit of his character²⁷ and in Romans 12 to think like him and see with his eyes²⁸. Consequently, we leaders have a responsibility to imitate Christ in our attitudes and conduct towards those we lead²⁹. We are portraits for our people, hung for all to see.

Christian leadership is not a celebrity role. Christ is our model and we will be judged by how closely we resemble him. Becoming like Jesus is not the miracle of a moment but a long and sometimes painful process. It requires continual self-reflection, prayer, dependence on God and obedience to the values of the Kingdom. It is here that the fiercest struggle takes place.

In our work with leaders, we see willingness to accept Servant-hearted leadership in theory, but it's much more difficult to translate into daily practice. We struggle up-stream against the full force of our culture. Our own cultural programming and that of our congregation's reacts against the practice of servant leadership.

Reflection

To stimulate further thinking before we move on, review the leadership culture of your own church and answer the following question:

- How does it reflect the servant character of Jesus in its leadership and structures?
Record your observations.

Notes

²⁷ Galatians 5:21-22

²⁸ Romans 12:2

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:1

6. Following the Servant King

A Blueprint for Sacrificial Leadership

Philippians 2 is not merely a theological explanation of Jesus's deity, humanity and mission, but a portrait of his character, presented as the model we should imitate. We will now sift through this text to pan for gold.

In Philippians 2:6-7 Paul writes, **'[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, being made in human likeness.'**

Wow, these words are mind-blowing.

In previous verses, Paul writes: **"do nothing out of selfish ambition"**.

The Greek word, usually rendered in our English translations of the Bible, 'selfish ambition', is 'eritheia'. Four centuries earlier, Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, used the identical word to describe the self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.

This old problem is ever new. In the media headlines, we're accustomed to news of politicians and leaders who have used their position for personal advantage, syphoning off a nation's wealth into Swiss bank accounts. Sadly, this behaviour is not restricted to corrupt officials but can be seen throughout society: the manager who uses his subordinates to obtain his fat bonus, or the head teacher who bullies staff to secure her own advantage. The truth is undeniable: there's a human tendency to use position for personal gain. Sadly, the church is not exempt.

We have already noticed this in the account of James' and John's request to have the seats of honour in the Kingdom, an action, no doubt encouraged by their ambitious mum (see Two Worlds Collide). But Jesus's behaviour is the opposite: he stripped himself of the unique advantages of deity, became a man, accepted the role of a slave and was crucified as a criminal. In his descent from heaven to the cross, he upturned all the world's hierarchical systems. The highest became the lowest, and in his descent, he redefined greatness and leadership in terms of sacrifice and servanthood.

The Secret Millionaire

A popular reality TV series placed wealthy industrialists in the homes of very poor people.

Their brief was to conceal their true identities with a convincing cover story and fully identify with the people: lodging with them, sharing family meals, experiencing their monetary struggles, helping with the housework, and actively engaging in every aspect of family life. Their anonymity was upheld but their status as some of the nation's richest people hadn't changed. Instead, they chose not to put it on public display or use wealth to alleviate personal discomfort or advance themselves in any way.

Living as poor people, they chose to fully embrace their new role and accept all its humiliations. In 2 Corinthians 8:9, Paul illustrates Jesus's voluntary humiliation with the dramatic contrast of wealth and poverty: **'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.'**

In the TV series the industrialists retained their wealth but accepted the limitations of poverty. Similarly, Jesus didn't abdicate his deity, but accepted the limitations of human life, humbled himself to become a slave and ultimately gave his life for us all on the cross. Paul compresses this into one pithy statement: **'for our sakes he became poor'**.

The rich people participated fully in the lives of the poor experiencing their struggles and privations. This had a profound effect and prompted some of them to launch ambitious philanthropic initiatives. But Jesus's coming did so much more. It wasn't a recruitment drive to enlist new clients for the Kingdom, or a social experiment in which the Son of God experienced our human nature, but a mission to rescue the race from ruin and remake it as a new creation. To achieve this, Jesus stooped from the highest to become the lowest slave, chose to live in obedience to the Father, submitted to the sacrifice and agony of the cross, and was exalted to the Lordship of the universe.

Power Redefined by Sacrifice

Now it's time to do some hard thinking. Did Jesus's role as Suffering Servant end with his crucifixion? Did he become a kindly autocrat at his exaltation? We don't think so.

Servanthood, displayed in sacrifice, is not a temporary role for Jesus, a humble uniform that he only wore in his earthly life and exchanged at his resurrection and ascension. As Suffering Servant and sacrificial Lamb, he also reigns forever as the 'King of kings and Lord of lords',³⁰ the apparent synthesis of two contradictory roles. This mind-bending paradox is dramatically illustrated in Revelation: the conquering, all-powerful 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah'³¹ presents as a scarred and wounded lamb, a picture of helplessness, slain for the sins of the world.

Even now, our exalted Lord still stoops to serve and beckons us to follow him.

What does all this tell us about Christian leadership?

People often seek high office for recognition and status, but Christian leadership is the reversal of this. It's modelled on the servant example of Jesus and is a rejection of status and desire for reputation. As has already been stated, servanthood and humility were not temporary qualities exhibited by Jesus during his earthly life. Rather, they're eternal attributes shared by each person of the Trinity.

Our secular ideas and experiences of power make it difficult for us to conceive of an omnipotent King who reigns over the universe and is worshipped by zillions yet is the

³⁰ Revelation 1:5; 17:14; 19:16

³¹ Revelation 5:5

humblest of us all. 'Servant King' seems like a contradiction in terms. Tragically, sin has introduced hierarchies: men dominate women; societies are subdivided by rank and status; bosses exploit their workers; those with power oppress the weak and turn other human beings into commodities; wars for mastery are commonplace.

At the personal level, people put their own interests and advantage above those of others. In contemporary thought, self-interest is often legitimised scientifically - the 'Selfish Gene' is regarded as beneficial and a catalyst of human evolution.

Jesus, as the agent of the New Creation, is radically counter-cultural; he introduces the Trinity as a model for his new servant community. Within the Trinity, there is no jockeying for power. Humility is a quality that all three Persons share in equal measure. This has huge implications for us all. God's Kingdom and reign is not like that of any earthly regime; it is in a unique category of its own. To understand it, we need to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and totally realign our thinking.

In Christ, God rules from a cross and reigns by service, sacrifice and love. Jesus's insignia of office is a slave's bowl, a towel and a cross. As we pray, think and meditate on his example, it will gradually transform us. Godliness is measured by how closely we resemble Christ.

The Way of Heaven's Leaders

Let's go back to basics and spend a moment reflecting on the Trinity. The doctrine is dynamite and has momentous implications for those of us who lead.

The danger in our thinking about God, is that we use human models to help us make sense of His mystery. It is difficult for us to envisage a Trinity of equals who share an identical nature and are defined by role rather than position. This is understandable because it doesn't reflect the way we naturally think.

Our portrait of God is often painted from a palette of human perceptions and behaviours. However, God is a totally different category of being; He transcends our understanding of personhood. There is no descending order from the Father to the Holy Spirit; instead, we see different roles and mutual submission among equals. The passion for the Others' glory is one of the most beautiful features of the Godhead. The complete absence of rivalry and their willingness to submit to one another should be reflected in the Body of Christ.

Leaders are not exempt. The humility, mutual submission and joy in service exemplified in the Trinity should be replicated in the Church. As the family of God, we mirror His character to one another and the world. In the light of what we have studied previously this is significant. The self-serving behaviour of the Scribes and Pharisees and the jockeying for top positions by James and John are the antithesis of God's character. A true child of God reflects his character and imitates his behaviour, giving preference to others and putting their needs before his or her own. These qualities distinguish the true servant hearted leader. He or she will not insist on their own way but will place the needs of those they lead before their own. When leaders exhibit these qualities, they facilitate team members to achieve a unified purpose.

Who's Holding the Baton? Your or God?

So much for the theory. Let's use the analogy of a conductor and an orchestra to illustrate this principle.

The conductor and the musicians share the same musical score and a common goal – applied to us, this is the fulfilment of God's purpose for the church and the release of each member into their full potential in Christ.

It is the conductor who enables the musicians to achieve their best and not the other way round. Success depends on the performance of every member of the orchestra. The conductor's role is key, enabling the musicians to coherently interpret the music and inspiring them to fulfil their part in the symphony.

Each musician is uniquely gifted and has mastery of their instrument but they can only achieve their full potential in the team, the orchestra. The conductor understands this; he doesn't bully or cajole but inspires the orchestra with a shared vision for the music. Their grasp and ownership of this gives harmony, passion and vitality to their performance. The composer's symphony is set on fire. The conductor, directing with baton, dramatic gestures and facial expressions, inspires each to contribute to the enthralling music.

The comparison between the conductor and Christian leader is significant. Let's break it down: The conductor presents the music of a great composer and not his own composition. Consequently, he serves another, a Beethoven, Bach or Mozart, and he conveys to members of his orchestra, the genius and vision of the symphony.

How does this apply to us as leaders?

We don't plug our own agenda but serve another, the Living God, and represent him to those who follow. Our task, like the conductor's, is to enable the team we lead, inspire them with a vision of God, and encourage the very best in each of them as we unite to serve the Lord's higher purpose. Ultimately, as leaders, we're servants of both God and his people.

Discord arises when the conductor behaves as a solo performer and treats the orchestra as the instrument of his personal vision and agenda. When Christian leaders abdicate their servant role, the Biblical pattern is reversed and team and congregation become a means to their end, servants and functionaries of the leader. Do you think this is an exaggeration?

We have encountered leaders who boast that they've dominated their team, ejected dissenters, and imposed their own vision on the church. This extreme may not resonate with you but the temptation to regard 'my way as the only way' is always present.

We all suffer from varying degrees of self-deception. Servanthood may be our theoretical paradigm for leadership, but in practice we tend to prefer our own way. Without knowing it, we can be autocrats parading as servants. For some of us, this is a 'mirror-moment'. We're confronted with our own reflection and realise that it doesn't match the image that we have constructed of ourselves. We're not who we thought we were. We can't rush past this challenge without pausing to answer two questions:

- When you look in that mirror, what do you see?
- What changes will you make?

Note

Leadership Modelled on the Cross

We've seen the importance of a leader as the servant of the team and people but we can't leave it there. Jesus, our example, was not only the servant of people but more importantly the servant of God. His mission was to do the Father's will even though it meant death on the cross. Obedience and sacrifice are two critical elements of the Christ-like servant leader. The cross was not only Jesus's hour of destiny but the symbol of his life. He lived in self-denial and submitted himself to the will of the father.

Two compelling ideas intersect at the cross:

In John 14 we read of the Son's love for the Father: **"So that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commands me."** And in John 10, of the Father's love for the Son - **"The reason my father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again".**³² The cross, therefore, is a partnership of love. The love of the Father for the Son and the Love of the Son for the Father overflows in love for the human race.

The cross is love's ultimate expression: the Father loves the world and sacrifices his own Son to salvage it; the Son gives his life on the cross, as a love offering to the father; and saves the world, providing an example of selfless service for all others to follow.

John, in his first epistle observes: 'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters'.³³ What does this tell us about Christian leadership? Our legitimacy as servants of the people is derived from our authenticity as servants of God. The conclusion is unavoidable: godliness, expressed in obedience and passion for God, is an indispensable qualification for true Christian leadership.

The message of Philippians 2 is that true leaders, prompted by love for God, follow Christ's example of obedience, service and sacrifice. They are image-bearers, showcasing Christ's character by prioritising service above position, rank, status and power.

What we are has far greater credence than what we say. If the musical score is Christ's character and teaching, any deviation from it leads to discordant and confusing double standards. This is illustrated in one of Andrew's Indian case studies.

Servanthood that Walks, Not Just Talks

For many years I've worked in India in film, theatre and Bible teaching and training. I regard the country as my second home and have established many enduring friendships and ministry partnerships. An experience in India challenged me to think soberly about the influence of godly example.

³² John 14:31 & John 10:17

³³ 1 John 3:16

A Christian team from the West had come to lead a series of workshops on servant leadership. The majority of pastors who attended were from poorer rural and small-town pastorates. Many of them were well educated, theologically literate and were leading rapidly growing churches and church networks. Some had become my friends and I was deeply impressed with their prayerfulness and servant-hearted leadership. We often rose early in the morning to pray together and enjoyed many boisterous theological discussions. I loved these men and women and praise God for their friendship and impact on my life.

Each day the visiting team would leave their 5-Star hotel, arrive at the training venue in a convoy of air-conditioned taxis, and teach on servant leadership. After they had taught, they were immediately whisked away by taxi to their luxury hotel to enjoy a delicious dinner in the hotel's air-conditioned restaurant. My friends were disorientated and confused and felt as if they had been the victims of an elaborate hoax.

The team descended from a world of privilege, delivered their teaching and then vanished in a fog of exhaust fumes to a world many Indians couldn't afford. For the team this was normal - they were offering a professional service paid for by Western donations - but for the pastors it was a mind-boggling double-standard – The question that dangled over the whole experience was, "How can these fellows possibly teach us about servant leadership when their lives and behaviour deny it?"

I found the question perplexing and wrestled for an answer. I had lived with some of the leaders in their thatched huts and shared their lives. The distance between us had closed and become almost invisible. We were brothers and sisters in the same family. For me the behaviour of the team seemed to be a betrayal of the people I loved - another example of cultural imperialism. My reaction may have been ungenerous, but it's how I felt at the time.

What was it that disturbed me so badly about the team? They were nice people but they seemed oblivious to their double standard. The teaching and example of Jesus had been over-written by their business practice. Secular ideas about servant leadership had been given a spurious legitimacy with a sprinkling of bible proof texts. The result? It had become a management method unrelated to Christ's character and example; they were merely training people in the latest fad in management procedure. Consequently, the team saw no need to apply it to their own lives and character.

I was seriously troubled by this inconsistency: First, because I knew some of the local pastors well, highly educated people who had given up wealth and advancement for humble Christian service. I had also witnessed first-hand the quality of their lives and thought they probably had more right to speak on servant leadership than any member of the visiting team because they were living it out.

My biggest struggle, however, was with the disparity between the team's behaviour and the teaching and example of Jesus. For me theology has been much more than a theoretical, academic exercise but something I try to work out in real life; I try to 'do' my theology.

The contrasts between team and Jesus were stark:

The team quarantined themselves in a prestigious hotel; Jesus shared in the nitty gritty of human life and shared the suffering, poverty and pain of the people. From the manger to the cross, he identified fully with all of us.

The teaching team showed little interest in the pastors' lives, deliberately maintaining a formal distance; their job was to teach not identify. Jesus loved people and drew them close, sharing his life with them.

The team saw their teaching as a duty discharged and not a practice exemplified; Jesus modelled his teaching in his life; he was the message.

What did I learn from this episode? The sobering truth that we can give a hearty "Amen" to servant leadership but never think through the implications, never put it into practice in our daily lives; it's just another trendy fad.

It drove me to serious self-reflection: Did my life match my teaching? Was I a true servant of Jesus or did I enjoy the adulation of being a minor public figure with a reputation as an inspirational speaker and a gifted writer and dramatist. Was I phoney or real? In my heart I yearned to be authentic.

I loved Jesus and wanted to follow his example of servanthood but the biggest obstacle was me – Andrew Brandon - my ego and my cultural programming. The behaviour of the team was a mirror for my own double standards.

Christ's example, the model for Christian leadership, can be hidden away in an attic with all the other irrelevant bric-a-brac of our lives. But the Servant King cannot be trapped in an attic. His challenge to me was, "Follow me as a servant or not at all".

Since then, I have stumbled along in his footsteps. I don't regard myself as the perfect servant leader. There have been slips, slides and falls as I've struggled to follow his example, but thank God for his grace and the empowering of the Holy Spirit to be a true servant.

Reflections

To help you come to terms with the practical realities of developing the character of a true servant leader, we suggest you answer the following questions and review your answers in the light of your earlier responses to similar questions. This will enable you to identify development in both your thinking and practice.

- Compare Christ's servant-hearted leadership example and teaching with your personal values, public statements and practice; identify any double standards.
- What have you learnt from this exercise?

Notes

7. Walking in Servanthood

Jesus Modeled It—Now It's Our Turn

Now it is time to review what we have learnt and create a personal action plan.

The purpose of our journey is not merely to inform you about the principles of servant leadership but to help you be better and more dynamic leaders, reflecting the character of Christ. This will involve us putting Christ's teaching into practice and encouraging our fellow leaders to do so too.

Jesus left his mark on history through his death and resurrection but also by his example and teaching. He spent three years with his disciples living out and teaching servanthood but even on the eve of his death they were still quarrelling about rank and status. It took the trauma of Christ's death and the triumph of his resurrection to establish servanthood as the driving force of their ministry.

As with the disciples, learning to be a servant is one of the most difficult challenges of the Christian life. It demands a transformation in our thinking about power, hierarchy and status, evidenced by a radical change of attitude and behaviour towards those we lead.

The practice of the church should be shaped by Kingdom values exemplified in servant-heartedness. When we try to do church using secular values and ignore the radical teaching of Jesus, conflict will occur. Applying worldly principles of leadership to the church is rather like expecting a petrol or diesel car to run on water; it will never work. It is crucial, therefore, to differentiate between ideas on leadership culled from our culture and those taught by Jesus.

Turning Teaching into Transformation

In this series we have used distance-learning to explain and encourage Christ-centred servant leadership. The advantage of this approach is that the material becomes freely available to leaders around the world. Its limitation, however, is that that we don't have the capacity for individual coaching. This can be overcome by identifying a local mentor with whom you can discuss the practical and spiritual challenges of leadership and who will hold you to account. It is crucially important that the mentor agrees with this material on servant leadership.

Alternatively, you can make yourself accountable to a fellow student who is also working through this teaching. Even limited coaching will be of significant benefit, challenging us to practice what we have learnt in this module.

If you have accessed this material as a leadership team, then taking regular time together to share your challenges, experiences, successes and failures will be of huge benefit. As leaders and leadership teams live out Christ-like servant leadership and share the teaching with their church, there will be a positive change in culture.

Reviewing our Leadership Landscape

As we reach the close of this module, it's time to pause and examine the journey we've taken. This is an invitation to thoughtful self-reflection—to uncover the seams of gold in our leadership and acknowledge the fault-lines that still need attention. Let's take a moment to recap and reflect on the key lessons:

The King who Kneels to Serve

In session 1 we discovered that Christ-like humility is the foundation of Christian leadership, symbolised by 'feet washing' and the 'cross'.

We don't readily associate these images with power and status, but rather with humility, sacrifice and service. Christ's humble example sets the 'gold-standard' for all Christian leadership. The way up to Kingdom greatness is the way down to servant-hearted humility.

We lead with a bowl and a towel, not a throne and a sceptre.

Two Worlds Collide

We discovered in session 2 that Peter's expectations of leadership behaviour were modelled on the world. We learnt that we often pay lip-service to servant leadership but, like Peter, recoil at its practice. The problem is that the hierarchical culture of the world is our default program.

Leaders are pedestalled in power and rule over us. We expect them to tell us what to do and our role is to obey and serve. Therefore, with Peter, we often regard leadership in terms of domination and control. **But in God's Kingdom, servanthood is not imposed on us but is our willing response to Christ's example: leaders choose to be servants like him, we choose to serve.**

The Seductions of Leadership

Then in the third session we learnt that Christ-like leadership is not self-serving.

In contrast to the behaviour of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, servant leaders are not motivated by the desire for personal glory or selfish ambition. We lead to serve and free others to serve. Whether we're involved in direct evangelism, community action, political initiatives, pastoral care or merely the humdrum routines of life, **we are all defined by the service of the bowl and towel, and the sacrifice of the cross.** We live to serve.

We also developed the idea that Christian leadership is radically counter-cultural. Historically, almost every culture exercises power and defines status through hierarchical forms of leadership. As we saw in the request of James and John for the best seats in the Kingdom, the disciples were not exempt. Christ responded, "It shall not be so with you." **His teaching and example of servanthood challenges all hierarchical forms of leadership regardless of where we find them.** We stoop to serve.

How Leaders Create Culture

Session 4 broke new ground by demonstrating how leadership behaviour sets the culture of the church; that is how the church actually works and behaves.

When leaders stated values and actions are out of step, people follow their example. Indeed, example is definitive. Leaders' example, good or bad, not their stated values or the Bible effectively define what is, or is not, acceptable in the church. This provides the working model for the church and so creates its culture.

The actions of a servant leader will encourage the formation of a servant-hearted church.

Leaders' integrity and credibility are measured by the correlation of their declared and lived-out values. Jesus, our model, gave us a perfect example of this; he matched his values with actions and trailblazed the way for us. Actions speak louder than words.

Flawed Leadership Models

In Session 5 we exposed the danger that secularised thinking and ambitions can influence our leadership behaviour.

In contrast, we showed how Christ chose not to exert his divine status and entitlement but deliberately embraced the role of servant. His model of servanthood is shockingly counter-cultural for any society or organisation that understands leadership in terms of rank and hierarchy.

Subconsciously, we often file servant leadership away as 'unrealistic' and replace it with secular methods. Why is this? Secular ideas on leadership are our default program, an inbuilt, reflexive pattern of behaviour learnt from childhood. To combat this, **we need to deliberately partner with the Holy Spirit, and allow Christ's example and the living Word of God to reshape our thinking.**

Following the Servant King

In the final session we showed that character is crucially important in a Christian leader and should reflect the servant-hearted character of Christ.

Christ's character, exemplified in his birth, life, teaching, death, resurrection and exaltation, gives us both a new and dramatic paradigm, and an example for servant leadership. The one who had a legitimate entitlement to rank, power and status, laid it aside in order to serve and give his life for us. His character and example are the gold-standard for our lives and leadership. Consequently, **we need to disentangle ourselves from secular role models and, as leaders, reflect the servant-hearted character of Christ.**

In the account of the servant leadership training team in India, we learnt that credibility cannot be detached from actions. **Servant-hearted leadership is not a fashionable fad but the way we live our lives and relate to other people.**

In the analogy of the orchestra, we discovered that leadership is not self-serving but enables and empowers others to achieve their full potential in Christ. **Servant leaders don't grab at**

the limelight but willingly advance others, even if eclipsed themselves. This is the real test of a true servant leader.

Reflections

As we conclude this module, let's assess how far we have come.

The following questions will both challenge us and chart our journey. They mark our progress as servant leaders and help us set in place our action plan. To be honest with others, we have first to be honest with ourselves. We're all inclined to believe the best version of ourselves and tend to avoid confronting our weaknesses. To escape this pitfall, it will be helpful to share with a trusted friend and give them permission to tell you the truth.

Respond to the challenge of each question by recording any actions you will take to grow as a servant leader.

- How do you think your leadership practice compares with the example of Jesus? For example:
 - How important are status, rank and power to your role as a leader?
 - If your leadership style is hierarchical, identify your reasons and justifications for it.
- How willing are you to work in a team and include the visions and ideas of others with your own?
 - Rank your answer on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'the primary vision is mine and I set the direction for the team' and 10 is 'the vision and direction results from a collaborative team effort'.
 - Jot down what you have learnt from this question.
- How do you relate to highly talented and motivated members of your congregation, particularly those who are equally or more publicly gifted than you?

For example:

- Do you regard them as a threat to your position?
 - Do you fear being overshadowed and surpassed by them?
 - Do you deliberately restrict their ministry to safeguard your own?
 - Do you endorse their ministry and facilitate their contribution?
 - Do you take positive steps to develop and encourage their gift and ministry?
- How willing are you to share your ministry, including your pulpit, with other gifted men and women in your congregation?
 - Are you jealous when they are affirmed and praised by members of the congregation?

- Does insecurity influence your leadership practice and marginalise talented people from ministry?
 - If so, what rationale do you use to justify their exclusion and why don't you apply the same rationale to yourself?
 - what changes will you make to address this issue?
 - How does your example and practice influence the attitudes and behaviour of those you lead?
 - What steps will you take to align your own leadership practice with the teaching and example of Jesus?
-

Notes

The next questions relate to leadership practice in your church. Once again it may be useful to enlist the help of a trusted friend who is familiar with your church.

Step back for a moment and review its leadership practice. Record your responses so they can be included in your action plan.

- Identify the key influences on leadership practice. Do they owe more to secular models than the servant example of Jesus?
 - Please rank your answer on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'entirely secular' and 10 is 'entirely Christ-like'.
 - What do you learn from this exercise?
- What do you think the benefits of Christ-like servant leadership will be to your people?
- How do you think servant leadership will affect the development of people and release their gifts?
- How can you encourage a servant hearted culture in your fellowship? What actions will you take to achieve this goal?

Notes

Prepare Your Action Plan

Once you have answered the questions, collate and expand your actions points into a plan.

An action plan allows you to set out the practical steps you will take as you seek to grow as a Christ-like servant leader.

Any action plan should be conceived and created in prayer. If practical, make time for a retreat in which you can pray thoughtfully about each element of the plan, attentive at all times to the voice and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If a retreat is not feasible, diary specific times apart to prayerfully work on your action plan without distractions.

Here are some tips on making an action plan:

- Take your action points and break them down into a series of practical, achievable steps.
- Clearly identify how each step will be achieved.
- For each action point, define clearly how you will identify progress and know that it has been achieved.
 - An action point has no value unless you know what achievement looks like.
- If appropriate, set timescales and deadlines for each action point.
- Share the plan with your team and mentor
 - Allow them to make practical suggestions.
 - And make yourself accountable to them and ask them to pray for you on every step of the journey
- Schedule periodic reviews to monitor progress and revise the action points and plan as necessary.
- Remember, an action plan is not set in stone but a work in progress.

Notes

Manifesto for Change

Your action plan is a manifesto for change, but change is often difficult.

It demands prayer, serious reflection on the implications of your servant leadership, obedience to the Word of God and, above all, reliance on the Holy Spirit. Authenticity becomes more important than personal advantage.

We recommend that you read, 'Our Iceberg is Melting' by John Kotter and Holger Rathberger published by Macmillan. It's not a Christian book but is full of helpful insights on negotiating change.

It's just the beginning

You have now arrived at the end of Christian Leadership Module 1.

We have discovered that Jesus taught and modelled a leadership character that is radically different to that of the world and we are required to follow his example.

In our next module we will be studying the critically important topic of team leadership. Failure to understand this practice has had a catastrophic effect on the church. It is estimated that between 70% to 80% of leaders are neutralised by burnout. There are a number of factors for this, but chief among them is failure to share the load and burden through team ministry. In this module we will guide you through the practical, day-to-day realities of servant leadership and show you how to achieve the enormous synergistic benefits of effective teamwork.

Appendix 1: The Man Who Met Himself

I remember the crackle of the fire, the acrid stench of smoke and my shadow mimicking me on the walls and flagstones of the courtyard. The night was dark, an all-engulfing darkness that could be felt like a palpable force. And amid that darkness, Caiaphas' house, shimmered like an alien constellation. Jesus' interrogation had begun. I can't dignify what was happening in that house as a 'trial'. A trial implies impartiality, justice, evidence and the search for truth. What I heard coming from that house didn't sound anything like justice to me. Roars of rage and indignant shouts crashed through the windows and doors and rolled across Jerusalem. They'd cornered their victim and were viciously putting in the boot! And here I was, his disciple, warming myself by the courtyard fire overwhelmed by a feeling of impotence. I wanted to kick down a door, rush into the building, and rescue him. But I was afraid. Yes, utterly terrified.

(Peter spends a few moments in reflection). I wondered what beast had been unleashed in the Sanhedrin. Whatever it was, it was much bigger than me.

I fidgeted and stretched my hands towards the fire but withdrew them instantly. Blood stained my fingers and palms, another man's blood. "Malchus," I groaned, and the girl next to me turned and studied my face. I remembered the weight of the sword, the cold hilt pressed in my palm and the blade glittering like fish scales in the torchlight. If my skill had been with weapons, he'd be dead.

Gethsemane! I'd stood up for Jesus then, bristled with aggression as the arresting party approached. Stared them down and then slashed at Malchus with all my strength, the blade catching the moonlight in a streak of fire. His head should have tumbled from his shoulders - that was my intent - but I only managed to cut off his ear. Jesus stooped down, picked up the ear and put it back, stifling Malchus' long shriek of agony, and turning his twisted grimace into an expression of surprise and relief. It happened so quickly and 'matter-of-factly', I wondered if I was still asleep under the garden's sheltering Olive trees. Was this a dream? I wish it had been. This was the last miracle I saw Jesus perform before his...!

My last glimpse of Jesus was of his face full of concern for Malchus and the gentle way he lifted the severed ear and attached it to his head. It was almost a caress.

Gethsemane was a confusion of memories, unconnected, random, strewn across my mind like flotsam from a shipwreck: the wind groaning in the Olives; the dry-bone rattle of crickets in the trees; the moon sweeping from its escort of clouds and turning the temple's dome into a blazing volcano; Jesus, a dark silhouette, a shadow sketched on the garden's deeper darkness; Judas and his feigned smile of welcome and the sibilant hiss of his treacherous kiss; Jesus marched away like a criminal surrounded by the temple guard, and the dry, sickly taste of fear and the deafening pitter-patter of my feet as I ran away. It was all over. The dream, for that is what it must have been, had come to an end, but I still loved him. They couldn't take that from me.

And so I stood and warmed my hands on the fire, watching the flames flickering and dancing with no apparent order or purpose. I felt as if I was looking at my own soul. I was scared, scared of myself, scared of my shadow, scared of the strangers that gathered about me, cowered from their eyes like a thief at an identity parade. The fire was hot, but I could feel the cold sweat dribbling down my face and hissing in the flames. Every instinct shrieked, "You're at risk in this place. Get out!" But something held me, something equally as strong as my fear: Jesus! Three years with him had created a bond that glued my feet to the flagstones. But I kept my face in shadow and shrank into myself. Someone may identify me with Jesus and yell, "Here's one of his disciples. I saw him with the Nazarene in the temple. Arrest him!"

I remember...will always remember the night when I met myself.

The truth is I've always been a coward but hid it behind a smokescreen of bravado. When I was a boy, I never ran from a fight. I was short, but not too short, just short enough to be picked on by bigger boys looking for easy glory. I always stood my ground, fought back with vicious fists and manic ferocity. I terrified the bullies. My cowardice, you see, was a secret affair. I was scared of myself. There was the me, the real me, and the sham I portrayed to the world. I was like one of those Greek actors in a comedy: different costumes, different makeup, different roles, but somewhere under all the junk and artifice the real me was hiding, waiting for the right moment to spring out and yell, "It's me folks! I'm the real Peter. This clown's an impostor."

I knew all about disguises, knew that the best place to hide was in a crowd. I was Peter the fisherman, Peter the leader, Peter the socialite, Peter the entertainer, but if the real Peter popped up, I'd cram him back in his casket and sit on the lid until he quietened down.

People were my refuge. I hated being alone...hated silence! In this courtyard, in this crowd there was no hiding place. I was alone, a fisherman stranded in a foreign port.

Jesus understood me, understood the extent of my loyalty and love, predicted my betrayal, predicted my....We faced each other across the Passover table. I remember trying to ward off the gentle scrutiny of his eyes. Tough words swaggered from my lips, but panic skulked in my belly and shivered across my skin with the prickle of tiny claws. "Lord," I said, "I'll never forsake you."

"Peter," he whispered, "before the cock crows you will deny me three times."

I remember the night, remember each moment: a cold jury of brilliant stars; the eerie glow of the moon so big and close and watchful it appeared to hover over me like a giant face; the firelight glittering in eyes and smouldering on curious faces; and the silence amplifying the howls and the scorn and the mockery of his trial. The night was a tense, suspenseful conspiracy of sounds and shadows.

I remember the remorse of my denials...I remember...will always remember the night when I met myself.

The girl was still staring at me. I scowled and tried to shake off her eyes, but they were barbed with certainty. I cursed soundlessly, vehemently. "You are one of his disciples," she said and raised her voice for the others to hear: "Here's one of his disciples."

"Girl, I don't know him," I retorted. The lie tumbled out by itself. Fear sucked the moisture from my tongue. I tried to speak, to deny all knowledge of Jesus, but my words were stranded like boats in the dried-up riverbed of my throat.

A second denial followed and a third. A voice heckled me from the shadows of the gate: "You're one of his disciples."

"I don't know him! I don't know the man." Flat denial. I lied to save myself; I lied out of habit and terror. I had always lied to save myself.

The man was merciless. He'd trapped his prey and wasn't letting him escape. He knew I was lying, and his voice was a soft sneer, slippery as a snake's skin: "You're a Galilean. Your accent gives you away. Lying won't help you."

"Man, I don't know him...I don't know him. I don't know what you're talking about," I yelled, and began to curse and swear. I was fully exposed in a ring of bright lights. The sham, cowardly me was pulled out of hiding for everyone to see. And then the cock crowed, "cock-a-doodle-doo" and Jesus looked at me. The cock was a small, scrawny bird but he fluffed his feathers until he was twice his normal size. I watched him for a moment, strutting on the edge of the firelight like the King of Fowls and saw the first pale flames of dawn torch his plumage, and then he changed. Changed! His feathers dropped away, his scrawny body reshaped itself, and I was looking at myself, my true self: a tragic, neglected figure, maimed, abused and blinded by my sins, denials and self-deception.

I ran for the second time that night, ran as I had never run before, but I could never run fast enough to escape myself. He stuck to my heels and matched me step for step, his feet drumming like thunder and beating out the same refrain,

Stop, little Peter,

Stop, little Peter

This race is lost.

Turn, little Peter,

Turn, little Peter

And face who you are.

I turned and..

I will remember...always remember the night when I met myself.

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