FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP
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FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP

Servant-Leadership for the Twenty-First Century

Edited by
Larry C. Spears and Michele Lawrence

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FOREWORD

THE HEART OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

Ken Blanchard

I AM EXCITED ABOUT this book! Why? Because I am a fan of Robert Greenleaf and think that servant-leadership is the foundation for effective leadership.

I had the pleasure of meeting Robert Greenleaf in the late 1960s, when I was at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. I was attracted to the school because Vernon Alden had come, as president of the university, with the vision of creating the “Harvard of the Midwest.” He had recruited all kinds of exciting people and resources to make this vision a reality.

I went to Ohio University in 1966 as an administrative assistant to the dean of the School of Business Administration, to help develop a graduate program in administration. In this role, I participated in the activities of the Ohio Fellows Group—a special undergraduate leadership program designed by Les Rollins, a longtime friend of Robert Greenleaf. Alden and Rollins were two of the first board members for The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership (then called The Center for Applied Ethics).

When Greenleaf spent a weekend with the students, I was enthralled with his thinking. In fact, when I got a chance to teach, I tried to put his servant-leadership concepts into practice. At that time, I began my practice of always giving the students the final exam during the first day of class. When I started doing that, other faculty members would ask, “What are you doing?”
I would say, “I’m confused.”

They’d say, “You act it.”

Troubled, I would respond, “I thought we were supposed to teach these young people.”

“You are,” they would be quick to reply. “But don’t give them the final exam ahead of time.”

My servant-leadership response was: “Not only am I going to give them the final exam during the first day of class, but what do you think I’m going to do all semester? I’m going to teach them the answers! You better believe it, so when they get to the final exam, they’ll get A’s!” To me, life is all about getting A’s, not about following the normal grade distribution curve.

During this period, Paul Hersey had come to Ohio University as chairman of the Management Department. In 1967, we started to write our textbook, *Management of Organizational Behavior* (now in its eighth edition), and to work on the development of Situational Leadership®. I knew Situational Leadership was a servant-leadership model, but the concepts I had learned from Greenleaf did not return to center stage in my work until the mid-1990s, when I began studying Jesus of Nazareth as a clear example of enlightened leadership. During this period, I was writing *Leadership by the Book*, with Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, and Phil Hodges, a longtime colleague.

I was first motivated to study Jesus as a leader when I was interviewed by Robert Schuller on *The Hour of Power* in 1983, as part of the publicity for *The One Minute Manager®*. In my interview, Reverend Schuller suggested that Jesus was a classic One Minute Manager: Once he had made his goals clear, he visited village after village, identifying people who were doing things right, and then praising or healing those gathered around him. If people were off base, he would rebuke them or redirect them.

My response was, “Interesting!” Those behaviors certainly exemplified the three secrets of the One Minute Manager: One Minute Goal Setting, One Minute Praisings, and One Minute Reprimands. After that exchange on *The Hour of Power*, my spiritual journey began to intensify. When I started to read the Bible, I began
to realize that everything I’d ever taught about leadership over the years, Jesus had already modeled. Jesus is not the only spiritual model, but his leadership style is often regarded as one of the most influential and effective the world has ever known. And he did it with twelve inexperienced people! The only person who had much education was Judas, who turned out to be his only turnover problem. Yet, with this ragtag group, Jesus was able to create a lasting impact. And central to Jesus’ philosophy was servant-leadership. I believe Jesus exemplified the fully committed and effective servant-leader. He sent a clear message on the primary importance of servant-leadership when James and John seemed to be vying for a special leadership role among the disciples:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant. (Matthew 20:25–27)

The key phrase here is “Not so with you.” Jesus was talking about a form of leadership very different from the model familiar to the disciples: a leader who is primarily a servant. He did not offer them a Plan B. Servant-leadership was to be their mode of operation. And so it should be for all leaders.

With that new insight, servant-leadership and what I had learned from Robert Greenleaf came center stage in my work again. I truly believe that servant-leadership has never been more applicable to the world of leadership than it is today. Not only are people looking for a deeper purpose and meaning when they must meet the challenges of today’s changing world; they are also looking for principles and philosophies that actually work. Servant-leadership works. Servant-leadership is about getting people to a higher level by leading people at a higher level.

Absorb the teachings from this book’s wonderful authors. Unless we begin to lead at a higher level, our future is in danger. Servant-leadership can make a difference in our life and in the lives of those we touch. But it takes heart. My hat is off to Robert Greenleaf, and to the efforts of Larry Spears, Michele Lawrence, and all the good
fools at The Greenleaf Center, for keeping Greenleaf’s work alive and for leading the servant-leadership charge.

KEN BLANCHARD

Dr. Ken Blanchard, cofounder and chief spiritual officer of The Ken Blanchard Companies, a full-service human resource development group, is characterized by friends, colleagues, and clients as one of the most insightful and compassionate men in business today. Few people have impacted the day-to-day management of people and companies more than Ken Blanchard. He is a prominent and sought-after author, speaker, and business consultant. His impact as a writer is far-reaching. His best-selling book, *The One Minute Manager*, coauthored with Spencer Johnson, has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide, has been translated into more than 25 languages, and is still on best-seller lists. He has established The Center for FaithWalk Leadership to help leaders of faith walk their faith in the marketplace and follow the servant-leadership model of Jesus of Nazareth.

Since the publication of the two servant-leadership anthologies, many new articles and essays have been written about servant-leadership. This volume brings together some of the most current and significant pieces on servant-leadership and on the growing influence of Robert K. Greenleaf’s writings. Among them are several essays, written especially for this comprehensive collection, by some of today’s leading thinkers, writers, and practitioners.

If you are intrigued, inspired, or moved by what you discover herein and wish to have more information concerning the
wide array of servant-leadership programs and resources, contact us at:

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