**Servant Leader:**

Abraham Lincoln is one example of a servant leader. Lincoln’s actions during the US Civil War are often cited as prime examples of servant leadership behavior (Hubbard, 2011). In particular, many scholars look to his preservation of the Union during this conflict and the freeing of the Southern slaves. Why do these particular actions qualify as servant leadership? The simplest reason is that it would have been much easier for Lincoln to let the Union dissolve and/or simply let slavery remain intact. Rather than taking the easy road, however, Lincoln chose the harder road because it would be more beneficial to the people he was serving in the long run, even if they did not realize it at the time.

A more modern example of a servant leader is Dr. Martin Luther King (Perry, 2010). Dr. King certainly did not choose the easy road when he assumed a leadership role in the Civil Rights Movement and chose to champion the non-violent approach. He knew that approach would be more difficult, but he also knew it would ultimately be more beneficial to those he was trying to serve. Even more servant-like was Dr. King’s well known desire to not be remembered for the prizes and accolades he won in life, but for his role in driving towards social justice. In other words, he cared more about how he helped others than about any recognition he could ever receive.

“So does that mean you have to be assassinated to be considered a servant leader?” While this may not have been the most politically sensitive way to ask this question, it does bring up a valid point of whether or not servant leaders have to sacrifice themselves to be considered a servant leader? After all, the original servant leader of Jesus Christ sacrificed himself. The answer to that question is sort of, but you don’t have to die to do it.

While not all servant leaders have to die in the process of their leadership activities to qualify as such, they do typically sacrifice their own goals and advantage for the benefit of those they serve. For example Albert Schweitzer was a late 19th and early 20th century German physician who could have had a very easy and profitable life for himself. Instead he focused most of his skills and energies on helping others. Mother Teresa was world famous for her service to the people of India, although she actively shunned most of the praise for her efforts. She even went so far as to refuse the usual banquet when she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and asked that the money that would be spent on it be donated to the poor. Both Mother Teresa and Dr. Schweitzer lived to ripe old ages.

So are these four people the only servant leaders out there? The simple answer to that question is absolutely not. There are countless others. Most of them, however, are people you have never heard of, and that is how they like it. After all, if they were worried about being famous for their achievements they wouldn’t really be servant leaders now would they?