



Book The Servant Leader

Transforming Your Heart, Head, Hands & Habits

Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges
Thomas Nelson, 2003

Recommendation

In 1982, Ken Blanchard, co-author of *The One-Minute Manager*, had a spiritual awakening and embraced Christianity, which he reports immeasurably improved his life. He and co-author Phil Hodges share their spiritual journey through teaching readers about servant leadership. They combine business, self-help and inspirational themes as they explain their approach. The biblical quotations and large text blocks can make the reading experience seem choppy, albeit worthwhile. Blanchard and Hodge's discussion of applying faith to the work world speaks extensively of Christianity and its beliefs.

Take-Aways

- The modern world seeks to separate the spiritual from the secular.
- Spiritual teachings offer guidance on how to lead.
- For a basic leadership plan, turn to Jesus's servant leadership principle that it is better to give than receive.
- Fight against egoism by following the 12 Steps of EGOs Anonymous, which teach you to keep your ego from sabotaging your leadership.
- Servant leadership's four elements are "heart, head, hands and habits."
- Leadership's primary function is serving others.
- Servant leaders can apply the "directing, coaching, supporting" or "delegating" leadership style.
- Servant leadership is never easy.
- Pray for help as you commit to this difficult, yet rewarding path.

Summary

The modern world seeks to separate the spiritual from the secular.

Secular culture tends to address spiritual issues during religious services and ignore them otherwise. But people can live better lives if they are more spiritual. Each religious tradition has its ways of connecting with the divine; for Christians, this means connecting with Jesus. One way to become the best leader you can be is to follow the Bible's teachings that leadership is – before anything else – an "act of service." Unless you serve others, you will never be a genuine leader.

Spiritual teachings offer guidance on how to lead.

People don't always think of Jesus in terms of exemplifying leadership skills and demonstrating practices that remain relevant in today's business world. However, Jesus had extensive experience dealing with issues similar to the ones modern managers confront routinely, including achieving goals while working with flawed peoples, identifying an unequivocal purpose, recruiting and training people to do specific tasks, dealing with those who sabotage and betray you, operating under never-ending scrutiny, avoiding egotism and abuse of power, handling criticism and opposition, and sacrificing for the common good.

For a basic leadership plan, turn to Jesus's servant leadership principle that it is better to give than receive.

Leaders influence other people's thoughts, actions and growth. This requires seeing things from your followers' perspective and having the empathy to walk in their

shoes. Empathy depends entirely on developing a generous heart, which is the source of real leadership.

“Servant leadership starts with a vision and ends with a servant heart that helps people live according to that vision.”

Serving others isn't the natural way people start out in life. Most people start life serving themselves. Babies, for example, demand service from other people with every action. The mature way is to give to others selflessly, not to give merely in order to get in return. Servant leaders take service to heart, a fundamental realignment.

Fight against egoism by following the 12 Steps of EGOs Anonymous, which teach you to keep your ego from sabotaging your leadership.

Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud taught that ego is all about putting the self first and being overly aware of the self's desires. Instead, think of ego as an acronym for “Edging God Out” or “Exalting God Only.” To manifest this approach, focus on the present, trust a higher power, and work toward fulfilling a purpose beyond gaining status and importance.

“The journey of life is to move from a self-serving heart to a serving heart. You finally become an adult when you realize that life is about what you give, rather than what you get.”

The Bible repeatedly warns against the sin of pride or ego. To avoid destructive egotism, think about others instead of yourself. Don't strive to be the center of attention. Proud people and self-serving leaders can turn away from pride by drawing on the 12 steps or guidelines of EGOs Anonymous:

1. Never let your ego sabotage your leadership. As a leader, don't serve yourself; serve others.
2. Understand that God can motivate you so that your thoughts and actions help you to become a servant leader.
3. Be willing to become an “apprentice of Jesus.”
4. Conduct an inventory of your motivation, ideas and actions.
5. Communicate in prayer and in conversations about how you need to improve to become a better servant leader.
6. Pray for help to address any character defects that interfere with your servant leadership.
7. Guard against egotism, avarice, timidity and the quest for power.
8. Apologize to everyone you've injured by being an egotistical leader.
9. Offer your amends to people, unless that action might hurt them.
10. Face any leadership mistakes you have made.
11. Spend time alone. Pray and study religious texts to learn to become a “servant first and a leader second.”
12. Practice the principles of servant leadership in your daily life, and communicate them to other leaders.

Servant leadership's four elements are “heart, head, hands and habits.”

Heart, head, hands and habits are the four essential building blocks of servant leadership. The journey to servant leadership takes both internal and external paths. Internally, you will cover the landscapes of the heart and mind. Externally, you will cover public concerns and work with those you lead. Whether they will follow your lead depends on your external actions (hands) and behaviors (habits). To maximize your organization's productivity and to build trust and loyalty, align your heart, head, hands and habits.

“All great leaders have a specific leadership point of view that defines how they see their role and their relationships to those they seek to influence.”

Servant leadership originates in the heart and moves directly to the head (the mind) in shaping your particular viewpoint about leadership. Through this shift, servant leaders align what they think and do with their spiritual values by “doing the right thing” and “doing things right.”

“The duty of a servant leader [is] the ongoing investment of the leader's life into the lives of those who follow.”

Leaders must be visionary and in touch with the future. Vision has three aspects. The first is your purpose and mission, which concern how your organization serves its customers. Your employees must understand and support your organization's customer service mission. Your organization's direction, where it will go and where it will be in the future are vital considerations.

“As a servant leader, you have to identify which changes are necessary to implement your vision and then help people move in that direction.”

The second aspect concerns how you define your future vision. Think it through wisely. Take a lesson from Walt Disney, who ranked safety at his theme parks as being more important than entertainment, courteous employees and efficient operations.

The third aspect concerns values – the moral, spiritual and practical standards that matter to you, your followers and your organization. Unfortunately, across the globe, fewer than 10% of organizations write out their values for their employees to read and understand. Values guide behavior, so failure to communicate your company's values may leave your employees behaving contrary to your wishes.

“Having truth-tellers in your life is important. It's probably your greatest opportunity for growth.”

In teaching how to implement servant leadership, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Consider the implementation role as fulfilling your vision and mission. The implementation phase always works best when customers are at the top of the company's hierarchy, directly served by customer-care employees whose leaders offer full support.

“Servant leaders understand that everyone needs to be heard, praised, encouraged, forgiven, accepted and guided back to the right path when they drift off course.”

Once you establish the heart and head phases of servant leadership, the hands-on phase allows your heart and head to produce “good fruit.” The hands phase includes managing transformational change and applying servant leadership principles to achieve your organizational goals and develop your employees. The hands phase calls for deploying three important “situational leadership” skills that trace back to biblical teachings on leadership:

1. **Assessment** – Before you can influence employees and help them meet their goals, identify individual workers’ current levels of capability based on their commitment and their competence.
2. **Adaptability** – Once you have determined each employee’s status, be flexible enough to tailor your leadership style for each individual employee. An effective leader applies the appropriate leadership style from his or her repertoire of techniques.
3. **Partnership**– The leader is responsible for working with his or her employees in productive, efficient ways.

Leadership’s primary function is serving others.

To be an effective servant leader, Jesus built daily habits to support the spiritual mission of serving others. Servant leaders can follow this example by developing five rigorous disciplines:

1. **Being alone** – Solitude can be an opportunity for spiritual renewal. Think of your solitude as spending time with a higher power.
2. **Praying** – You communicate with the divine through prayer. Make prayer your default option when you face difficult challenges. Besides prayer, consider studying, meditating and fasting. Prayer makes you stronger spiritually and builds your personality. Don’t force prayer. Have easy conversations with your higher power.
3. **Studying scripture** – Reading holy writings helps you with current and future challenges. The best way to apply scripture is to memorize it. You can renew your mind – and your entire self – through devotional readings and contemplation of the lessons this process provides.
4. **Feeling that God loves you** – Those who experience this sense of heavenly love find they can move ahead in life with confidence, trusting that things will work out as they should. Demonstrate the same unconditional love for those around you.
5. **Building strong relationships** – Create beneficial relationships with objective people you trust to speak honestly without fear. Be vulnerable to their counsel. When you open yourself and graciously accept feedback, you grow in many ways.

Servant leaders can apply the “directing, coaching, supporting” or “delegating” leadership style.

Leaders can choose among four different leadership styles. The directing style involves giving detailed directions on specific roles and goals. The leader using this style closely monitors each person’s work activities. When applying the coaching style, the leader carefully explains to employees precisely what they must do to succeed with their responsibilities. Using the supporting style, the leader supports staff members while providing minimal direction. To embrace the delegating style, a leader emphasizes independence, provides employees with everything they need to do their jobs and delegates the work to them.

Servant leadership is never easy.

Being a servant leader can change your life, but don’t expect learning to practice servant leadership to be effortless. Your life is already full, and you are adding to your responsibilities and challenges by setting yourself the mission of incorporating servant leadership into your life – which could be a major, disruptive change.

Pray for help as you commit to this difficult, yet rewarding path.

Share your commitment to use the lessons of servant leadership as your basic leadership plan in conversations with someone you respect and trust. Develop a game plan to incorporate servant leadership into your life by taking several action steps:

1. Review the touchstones of servant leadership, particularly those that involve behavioral change on your part.
2. Share what you have learned with people you lead. You don’t do leadership “to people.” You do it “with people.”
3. To manage your transformation into a servant leader, develop habits modeled on the life of Jesus. Leave time for solitude, prayer and scriptural study.

As you move forward, follow this checklist of servant leader essentials:

- Create a personal mission statement.
- Incorporate faith as the core of your plan for personal success.
- Operate according to biblical values.
- Keep a journal to record your problems, conquests and lessons learned.
- Consult with reliable truth-tellers to help you stay on course.
- Turn to inspirational writings for support when you need help.

About the Authors

Ken Blanchard, PhD, is co-founder and chief spiritual officer of the Ken Blanchard Companies and co-founder, with **Phil Hodges**, of The Center for FaithWalk Leadership, which does business as Lead Like Jesus. Blanchard co-authored *The One-Minute Manager* with Spencer Johnson.