

Over my federal career as an engineer and now as a minister, I have read a lot of books on leadership, and attended more conferences and workshops on leadership than I would like to remember. Every expert and consultant has their own guidelines for effective leadership. Billy Martin, former manager of the New York Yankees baseball team, once said: “The key to effective leadership is keeping the five guys who hate you away from the five guys who are undecided.” Here’s another one that I found that I really like: “People who enjoy meetings should never be in charge of anything!” Finally, Lewis Grizzard of the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote: “Life is like a dogsled team. If you are not the lead dog, the scenery never changes.”

But over the years, I have come to the conclusion that the best source on leadership is the Bible. So, for several years, I have been studying the leadership styles of certain biblical characters. As a result I have developed a great interest in what I believe is the ultimate leadership style and that is servant leadership. This is the leadership that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ practiced and demonstrated throughout His ministry here on earth. Jesus Christ was and is the ultimate Servant Leader.

Now you don’t hear much about servant leadership in today’s secular world. And when you think about it, when was the last time you even heard it mentioned in church? Have you ever heard a sermon on servant leadership? Given the importance of effective leaders in business, government and the church, you might expect that the Bible would use the term “leader” more often. However, the King James Bible only uses the term “leader” six times. Most often the Bible uses the term “servant.” In Malachi 4:4, God does not refer to Moses as “His leader,” but to Moses as “His servant.” This is exactly what Jesus taught.

Jesus was radical in His teaching on leadership; His concept of leadership was contrary to the world’s approach. In the eyes of the world, the term “servant” implies low prestige, low respect, and low honor. Now most people don’t like to be associated with such a low-value role or position. We don’t like that word “servant;” it implies that we are subject to someone else and are second class leaders. But in Jesus’ eyes these are the first class, the real leaders. In Mark 10:45, Jesus even said that He came not to be served, but to serve. However, we as Christians want to reverse this saying; we have a consumer mentality; we like being served and in charge; being able to tell others what to do; it’s in our DNA to be bossy; to be in control!

Servant leadership can be defined as “a living statement of who we are in Jesus Christ, how we treat one another, and how we demonstrate the love of Christ to the world around us.”

Servant leadership starts in the heart with motivation and intent. Servant leaders are not leaders on the basis of their position, title or leadership role, but on their desire to help others and serve the Lord. Besides Jesus, there are many excellent examples of servant leadership in

the Bible, each with their own personal leadership style, such as Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, Luke, and Paul. This morning, I want to focus on one particular servant leadership style that is often overlooked in all the books and seminars on effective leadership, and that is “going the extra mile.” One of the best examples of this leadership is the Parable of the Good Samaritan found in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, verses 25 through 37.

Read Luke 10:25-37

Did you know that the phrase “going the extra mile” came from the Bible? In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:41, Jesus said: “If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” Now this statement definitely sounded ridiculous to Jesus’ audience at that time, and probably caught them off guard. Because there was a Roman law that allowed officials of the Roman government to commandeer any Jewish man to carry their baggage for up to one mile. A Roman mile was 1000 paces or 1520 yards; shorter than an English mile. Most Jews would count right up to 1000 paces and then drop the baggage; they knew exactly when their duty was done. Jesus’ command to go the extra mile must have really surprised them. In this passage, Jesus gives us a goal for living our daily lives, going the extra mile, doing more than expected of us, adopting a servant attitude.

In this story from Luke, the Good Samaritan definitely goes the extra mile. A lawyer comes to Jesus with a question to test Him. Is anybody here a lawyer? I don’t want to offend anybody. Do you know how you can tell when a lawyer is lying – his lips are moving. In a cemetery, there was a tombstone with the inscription “Here lies a lawyer as usual.” But seriously, practicing law is an honorable profession; my son is an attorney. He once told me that the reason that there are more jokes about lawyers than engineers is because engineers are so boring.

Well, the lawyer asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. As was His practice, Jesus turns the question around and asked him: “What does the law say?” The lawyer replies: “Love the Lord your God with all heart and all your soul and all your strength and all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus told the lawyer that he had answered correctly, go and follow these two commandments, love God and love neighbor, and everything will be alright. But being a lawyer, he wanted to dig deeper and asked Jesus to define who his neighbor was. In reality, his question was not based on a sincere desire to gain additional insight; he wanted to justify his current way of life which relied on a “checklist” of laws to be saved. So Jesus told him a story to show that simply knowing the law is not enough; you must put it into practice. Knowledge without application is useless.

In this story, a Jewish man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked, beaten, robbed and left for dead. Three people came along later and saw the man lying in the ditch bleeding. The Priest and Levite passed by on the other of the road, not acknowledging the man in need.

But a Samaritan stopped and gave him the much needed first aid. Then he put the injured man on his donkey and took him to a nearby inn where he paid for any care the man would need until he recovered. Jesus chose a Samaritan as the main character to emphasize the point of the story, because Samaritans were hated and considered unclean and low class by the Jews who were listening to Jesus.

Now you may wonder why would Jesus include a Priest, a Levite and a Samaritan in this story. By using characters from three different backgrounds, Jesus wanted to raise different levels of expectations from His audience. A Priest was God's representative and a Levite his assistant; because of their positions, they would both be considered examples of righteousness. Thus, Jesus' listeners would have expected them to help. On the other hand the Samaritan was despised and considered no good; thus no one would have expected him to offer any assistance. The Priest and Levite are considered leaders by their religious positions, but the Samaritan was just an ordinary man, looked down on by the Jewish people. But who really demonstrates servant leadership here; who takes action; who shows compassion; who goes the extra mile?

Both the Priest and Levite could have come up with excuses; ineffective and poor leaders always do. The Priest would have likely said that it looked like the man was already dead and touching a dead body would have made him unclean; thus, he would not have been able to perform his duties as a priest. In other words, he would have gotten his hands dirty and messed up his clean robe. The Levite would have reasoned that sometimes thieves use decoys to trap travelers along this road and he was just playing it safe. It wasn't worth taking a risk. In summary, both of these men were selfish; looking out for their own interests; neither one of them was willing to go the extra mile. Like a lot of people today, they wanted to serve God, but only in an advisory capacity!

I believe that this is one of the biggest problems in our society today, and even in the church. No one wants to go the extra mile; no one is willing to get their hands dirty or to take a chance; we're all playing it safe. Having worked 31 years in government and now 22 years in ministry, I have seen it over and over again – people doing just enough to get by; just enough to keep their job. They will put in the minimum amount of time and effort required; and you better not stand in the door way at quitting time or you'll get run over.

I don't know where the work ethic of my day has gone. When I was growing up we were told that you did what was expected and then more. When I came to New Mexico in 1990 to take over our agency's office here, I had an employee who told me that he had come to Santa Fe to "retire" while still working and take it easy, and that I was stressing him out. Well, I told him that he better get used to it or find another job; he transferred to another state within a month; he didn't want to go the extra mile.

Now what does “going the extra mile” really mean, what are some examples of it? Let me share some of my thoughts on what this leadership style involves. First, I divide today’s leaders into two categories – talkers and doers. The world is full of talkers who will tell you what they have done or what they are going to do. They will sit around all day long talking about things; have long conversations; read books; attend workshops and then do nothing; nothing changes. On the other hand, the doers get things done. We need doers; people willing to get their hands dirty; people willing to make decisions and take action like the Samaritan. Gandhi’s grandfather once told him that there are two kinds of people: those who do the work and those who take the credit. He told Gandhi to try and be in the first group; there is less competition there.

This brings me to another division among leaders – the performers and the servants. A “performer” will try to look busy when there is an audience, but the minute the people are gone, they’ll stop working; they are always looking for recognition and applause. On the other hand, the “servant” as illustrated by the Samaritan will normally work behind the scene, expecting no recognition and getting the job done. You can tell a lot about a person by how they act when they think no one is watching.

The servant leader is always interested in the well-being of others; they put others before themselves. They practice agape love, seeking what is best for the other person no matter what. There is no “I” or “me” in their vocabulary; they rarely talk about themselves. The servant leader focuses on details; getting the job done right the first time. They see things that need to be done when others don’t. I came across a quote in one of my readings that says: “Eyes that **look** are common; eyes that **see** are rare.” The Samaritan had those rare eyes which I hope and pray we also have.

In reality, no one expects you to go the extra mile; except Jesus. No one expects you to go beyond what is expected or required. No one expects you to do more than what you have to do, except Jesus. Jesus knew that going the extra mile is a powerful witness to His presence in your life, and will change what other people think of you. By going the extra mile we demonstrate God’s love within us to others in a world that definitely needs true leaders. On the cross, Jesus went the extra mile for us and beyond.

So the question for us this morning is which example will you follow – the Priest and Levite and walk on by, or the Samaritan, getting our hands dirty doing the Lord’s work? Remember only one of them is referred to as “good.” Are you willing to be a servant leader? Are you willing to make a difference in our community and the lives of others? Are you willing to go the extra mile? Let’s focus on giving; giving back to God by reaching out and serving our community. In the bulletin is an insert listing several ways that you can go the extra mile. If you are not actively involved in one of these ministries, I encourage you to get involved. I have identified a variety of outreach activities for all ages; there’s something that everybody can participate in.

Find a place to serve and share God's love with others. It may mean extra work, getting dirty, but believe me you will feel better inside and experience the presence of God as never before. Let's all go the extra mile for Jesus; He did for us! Amen