

Servant Leadership

An E-Book Compiled by SOS Leadership Institute



Contents

Introduction

To Lead is To Serve:

10 Characteristics of Servant Leaders
..... 2

Chapter 1

What is Servant Leadership?

..... 3

Chapter 2

Servant Leadership Characteristics:
Listening and Empathy

..... 4

Chapter 3

Servant Leadership Characteristics:
Healing, Awareness, and Persuasion

..... 5

Chapter 4

Servant Leadership Characteristics:
Conceptualization, Foresight, and Stewardship

..... 6

Chapter 5

Servant Leadership Characteristics:
Commitment to the Growth of People
and Building Community

..... 7 & 8

Chapter 6

Servant Leaders Make a Difference

..... 9

To Lead is To Serve: 10 Characteristics of Servant Leaders

By: Billy Moyer

"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant."

- **Max DuPree**

A servant leader's mantra:

**To lead is to serve.
To serve is to lead.**

Welcome to an e-book that further explores this leadership mantra, exploring the ten characteristics of the servant leader, as identified by Larry C. Spears based on the writings of Robert Greenleaf.

A mantra can facilitate transformation. My highest aspiration is to be a servant leader, someone who recognizes that service of others is the ultimate act of leadership. If I am leading only because I want people to follow me, because I crave the spotlight, I am not really a leader at all. I can identify times in my life when I led for all the wrong reasons. My motivation to lead has evolved over the years, and I believe that I truly became a leader when I learned to serve without expectation.

In *The Servant as Leader* Robert Greenleaf wrote, "It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"

I agree with Larry Spears assessment about servant leadership, which he says "truly offers hope and guidance for a new era in human development."

What is your leadership mantra?

What is your highest aspiration?

Are you a servant leader?

Chapter 1

What is Servant Leadership?

Servant leadership isn't a new concept. Its earliest roots can be found in religious texts from many world religions. The modern understanding of servant leadership comes from Robert Greenleaf, who is often called "the father of servant leadership." The Center for Servant Leadership at the Pastoral Institute in Georgia defines servant leadership as "a lifelong journey that includes discovery of one's self, a desire to serve others, and a commitment to lead."



Servant leadership resonates with us at SOS Leadership because it aligns with our mission of "developing leaders that make a difference." Servant leaders exhibit a steadfast commitment to making a difference, to leaving this world better than they found it. Servant leaders also seek to enhance the growth of all individuals who follow them. In an organizational context, this means that they are eager to invest in staff at all levels, recognizing the value of both personal and professional development. Servant leaders also understand that the "enemy of growing is knowing," and they are constantly looking for opportunities

to learn and grow.

Larry Spears, who served for 17 years as the head of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, created a set of 10 characteristics of servant leaders after carefully studying Robert Greenleaf's original writings. These characteristics include: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community.

In the pages that follow, we will explore each of these characteristics of servant leadership and challenge ourselves with tough questions about our own leadership.

Reflection Questions:

- How do you define servant leadership?
- Is there a leader in your life who models servant leadership for you? What do you respect and admire most about this leader?

Chapter 2

Servant Leadership Characteristics: Listening and Empathy

1. Listening

As a servant leader, you are a good listener. All leaders are called to be effective communicators with strong decision-making skills. However, not all leaders listen well. In fact, many create the illusion of listening without hearing a word that is said. What sets you apart as a servant leader is a deep commitment to listening with an open mind and heart to what is being said. As a servant leader, you also have a keen ability to “hear” what is not being said because you become deeply engaged in conversation and pay careful attention to body language and other nonverbal cues.

Servant leaders are not only skilled at listening to others; you also listen to yourself. You make time for personal reflection often in order to facilitate growth and lifelong learning.

2. Empathy

You strive to understand and empathize with others. Empathy is defined as the ability to identify with the feelings of others. As a servant leader, you consider it important to “walk a mile in another person’s shoes” so that you can fully appreciate what they are experiencing. According to Steve Hein (EQI.org), “the ability to empathize is directly dependent on your ability to feel your own feelings and identify them.” Again, this showcases the need for self-reflection so that you can

acknowledge, identify, and accept your own feelings.

You know all too well that people do not always articulate their feelings well. Thus, servant leaders must ask the right questions, observe behavior, and sometimes read between the lines in order to come to an understanding of another’s feelings. Your empathy comes alive when you are aware of the person’s feelings, you acknowledge them, and you actively listen to what is spoken and unspoken.

Haim Ginott once said, “It takes time and wisdom to realize that the personal parallels the universal and what pains one man pains mankind.” Ultimately, servant leaders know that we are all connected; you take that human connection seriously and seek to show empathy rather than cynicism.

Reflection Questions:

- In what circumstances do you struggle to be an effective listener?
- How do you minimize distractions so that you can listen and hear all that is being said (and not said) by those with whom you interact on a daily basis?
- How often do you spend time in quiet reflection to listen to yourself?
- In what ways do you show empathy for others?
- When have you struggled to understand and empathize with someone?

Chapter 3

Servant Leadership Characteristics: Healing, Awareness, and Persuasion

3. Healing

Servant leaders recognize and acknowledge the brokenness that exists in the world. You feel called to "help make whole" those with whom you come in contact.

4. Awareness

As a servant leader, you have a deep self-awareness and are committed to coming to a better understanding of yourself. You know that this process is often difficult and can lead to intense discoveries that will challenge you, yet you embrace these opportunities to deepen your knowledge of who you are and how you can lead most effectively. Robert Greenleaf shares, "Awareness is not a giver of solace - it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener."

Further, you are aware of what is going on around you. You pay attention and remain attuned to what is happening in the lives of those who follow you. When someone is struggling, you don't have to be told; you already know.



5. Persuasion

Servant leaders possess a keen ability to persuade. You seek to build consensus rather than asserting your power to get your way. While positional leaders at times use coercion, servant leaders are deeply committed to a more inclusive decision-making process where each member of the group is heard and valued.



Reflection Questions:

- Where is healing needed in your life?
- When have you encountered someone in need of healing and taken the time to be present?
- What actions are you taking to develop a deeper understanding of yourself?
- When have you exhibited a lack of awareness about what is happening in the lives of those who follow you?
- In what ways do you seek to build consensus?
- How often do you use coercion instead of persuasion?

Chapter 4

Servant Leadership Characteristics: Conceptualization, Foresight, and Stewardship

6. Conceptualization

As a servant leader, you recognize the importance of dreaming, of envisioning what's possible. You can think "outside the box," without letting reality get in the way of your creative thinking. This makes me think of one of the mantras of my alma mater, St. Edward's University, where I also teach in the School of Management and Business: "Learn to think." We strive to ensure that our students learn to think critically and creatively and dare to act, all characteristics of servant leadership as outlined by Larry Spears and Robert Greenleaf.

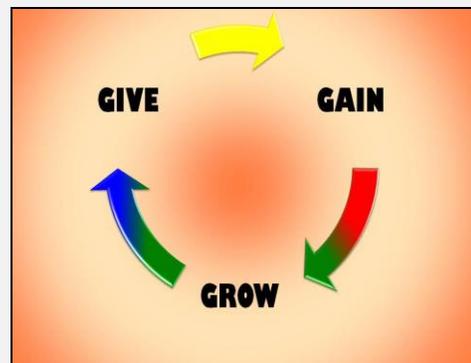
Further, as a servant leader you understand the delicate balance between conceptual thinking and practical application, which I often refer to as the struggle between knowing and doing.

7. Foresight

Larry Spears defined foresight as the ability to "understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future." As a servant leader, you carefully think about decisions with a focus on identifying the results of your actions on others. Foresight is deeply connected with intuition.

8. Stewardship

You understand your responsibility to serve others. You don't serve out of duty; your service is a conscious choice that arises from empathy and an awareness of the needs of others. I see stewardship as a recognition of the tremendous blessing of giving generously of my time and talent and sharing my treasure joyfully with organizations that make a difference in areas that align with my life's purpose.



Reflection Questions:

- What are your dreams? What does your future hold?
- As a manager, are you able to think beyond the day-to-day realities?
- What have you learned from the past and how do you apply that knowledge in your daily decision making?
- When have you utilized foresight in your life? What was the result?
- Am I good steward of the gifts I've been given?
- In what ways am I sharing my time, talent, and treasure with others? How does this align with my life's purpose?

Chapter 5

Servant Leadership Characteristics: Commitment to the Growth of People and Building Community

9. Commitment to the Growth of People

As a servant leader, you have an inherent belief in human potential, and thus you have a steadfast commitment to the growth of each person you lead. I sincerely believe that this is one of the characteristics that sets the best leaders apart. Along with recognizing your commitment to the growth of others, you know that you must continuously invest in your own growth. You develop goals focused on growth, always recognizing that "the enemy of growing is knowing."

Larry Spears tells us that the "servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything within his or her power to nurture the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of employees." This translates to investing in people; these investments involve both time and money. Spend time listening to your people; take the time to understand what matters to them. Ask them about their dreams and goals, and seek to learn about how they want to grow both personally and professionally. Offer a variety of professional development opportunities based on what you've learned from your team. Servant leaders know that learning isn't something that just happens once a year at a conference or training workshop; it is an ongoing investment. After all, "leadership and learning

are indispensable to each other," as John F. Kennedy so eloquently said.

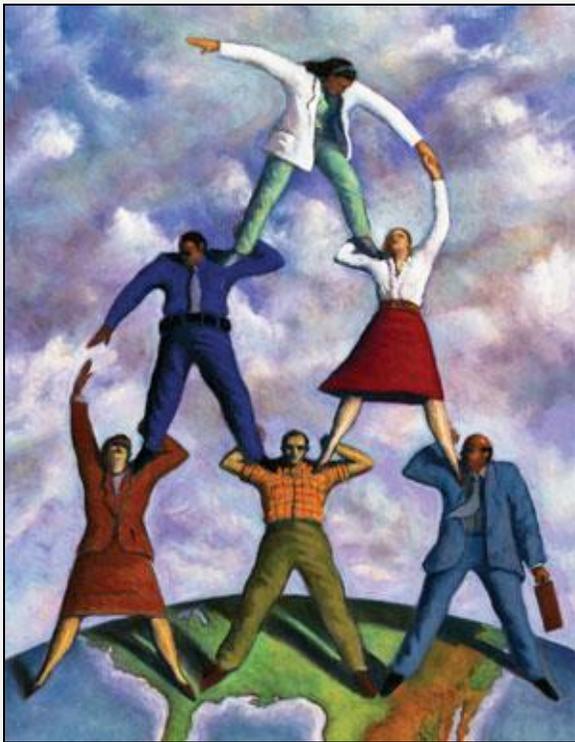
10. Building Community

You seek to bring people together, to help them create a meaningful community. You know that community is created when you exhibit your full potential as a servant leader and put into practice the other nine characteristics highlighted in this e-book. Robert Greenleaf, the father of servant leadership, said, "All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of people is for enough servant leaders to show the way." Are you showing the way?



One of my favorite quotes about community building comes from social activist Dorothy Day, "We have all known the long loneliness, and we have learned

that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.” I’m a stronger believer that business and love coexist, and Greenleaf has laid out how: servant leaders are called to build community. As a servant leader, you care deeply about people, and you want to bring them together for a common purpose, to achieve greatness together.



- In what ways are you building a community at work? How about at home?
- How do you bring your team together at work? How do you motivate them to achieve their full potential as a team?
- Will you accept Robert Greenleaf’s challenge to be a servant leader who shows the way?

Reflection Questions:

- How have you invested in the growth of your people? Can you think of examples of your investments of both time and money in those who follow you?
- Are you committed to your own growth? Do you have a plan for your personal and professional development?

Chapter 6

Servant Leaders Make a Difference

The mission of SOS Leadership is “to develop leaders that make a difference.” Essentially, we strive to develop servant leaders.

Today remember that you are a leader, and you can make a difference. What sets servant leaders apart is the desire to make a difference, the yearning to be of service. Servant leaders lead WITH PURPOSE and choose to lead ON PURPOSE.

Leadership is a choice! You cannot lead with purpose until you know your life's purpose, and you must make a conscious choice to lead. Choosing to be a leader isn't a choice you make just once in your life; it's a choice you must make daily.

Servant leadership requires choosing to put these characteristics into practice: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. It requires asking yourself the tough questions. Start with the reflection questions presented throughout this e-book, and use these questions to challenge yourself to lead at a higher level.

Servant leadership isn't just a powerful concept; it's a way of life. It offers a path to transform yourself and those you lead. Will you accept the invitation?

Go make a difference!

To lead is to serve.
To serve is to lead.