



WEEK 23

2ND SEMESTER · DISCIPLESHIP & SERVICE

Biblical Leadership

Servant leadership – not to be served, but to serve

SPIRITUAL THEME

Biblical Leadership

PERSONAL THEME

Servant leadership – leading by example

Leaders: David Kyakulaga · Bernd Broschek

Bwembe Jesus Follower Bible School

Bwembe, Uganda · A project of Get it Done – direkte Entwicklungshilfe

verein-getitdone.org

Personal Theme: Servant Leadership - Leading by Example

MAIN IDEA

By the end of this lesson, the students should understand that biblical leadership is not the use of people for the leader's honor. Biblical leadership is following Jesus so closely that we serve, guide, protect, teach, and lead others by example.

A short word from Dietrich Bonhoeffer helps us begin: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." This does not mean every leader will die physically for the ministry. It means that every true Christian leader must die to pride, selfish ambition, love of control, and the desire to be important. The leader belongs to Christ before he leads people.

1. Why This Lesson Matters

Many young leaders want to do something great for God. This desire can be good when it comes from faith, love, and obedience. But the same desire can become dangerous when it mixes with pride. A Bible student may begin to dream about preaching to many people, being called pastor, receiving honor, or becoming known. A church leader may begin by serving, but later he may expect special treatment. A ministry worker may speak about Jesus, but slowly make the ministry about his own name.

Jesus does not destroy leadership. He cleans leadership and puts it under the cross. In Mark 10, Jesus does not tell the disciples that there will be no greatness in the kingdom. He teaches them what greatness means in His kingdom. The world often thinks that greatness means control over others. Jesus says that greatness means becoming a servant. The world often thinks the first person is the one who stands above others. Jesus says the first person becomes slave of all.

This lesson is therefore not only for pastors. It is for every student who will lead a family, a Bible study, a youth group, a church department, a small church, a school, or one younger believer. The question is not first, "How many people follow me?" The first question is, "Am I following Jesus in the way I lead?"

2. Main Bible Passage: Mark 10:35-45

Read the whole passage slowly in class. Let the students see the full movement: a request for position, the painful road of Jesus, the anger of the other disciples, and then the teaching of Jesus about true greatness.

"James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came near to him, saying, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we will ask.' He said to them, 'What do you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Grant to us that we may sit, one at your right hand, and one at your left hand, in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to

him, 'We are able.' Jesus said to them, 'You shall indeed drink the cup that I drink, and you shall be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit at my right hand and at my left hand is not mine to give, but it is for whom it has been prepared.' When the ten heard it, they began to be indignant toward James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, 'You know that they who are recognized as rulers over the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant. Whoever of you wants to become first among you shall be bondservant of all. For the Son of Man also came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Mark 10:35-45)

Parallel passages for this lesson: 1 Peter 5:1-4 and Philippians 2:3-8. We use only these two passages, so the teaching stays clear. First Peter shows how leaders shepherd the flock without domination. Philippians shows the mind of Christ: humility, service, and obedience.

3. The Problem: Wanting the Crown Without the Cross

James and John ask for the highest places of honor. They want to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus in His glory. In their minds, the kingdom is coming, Jesus will reign, and they want positions close to the throne. Their request is bold, but it also shows that they do not yet understand the way of Jesus. Just before this passage, Jesus speaks again about His suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. The disciples hear words about the cross, but their hearts move toward rank and honor.

A leader can speak near to Jesus and still think in a worldly way. This is a serious warning. James and John were real disciples. They had left much to follow Jesus. They had seen His miracles. But they still carried wrong ideas about power. A student may be in Bible school, sing worship songs, preach in church, and still secretly desire leadership for the wrong reasons. The old heart loves recognition. It wants people to notice. It wants a title before it has a towel.

Jesus answers them with the language of the cup and baptism. In the Old Testament, the cup can speak of suffering and judgment. Jesus is moving toward the cross. He will drink the cup of suffering for sinners. He will be baptized, overwhelmed, by suffering and death. James and John say, "We are able," but they do not understand how deep this road is. Later they will suffer for Christ, but they cannot take the unique saving place of Jesus.

Application: A Christian leader must ask God to search his motives. Why do I want to lead? Is it because I love Christ and His people, or because I want honor? Do I want to be seen, or do I want people to see Jesus? Am I willing to serve when nobody thanks me? Am I willing to carry responsibility when it is heavy? Am I willing to obey Scripture when it costs friendship, money, comfort, or popularity? These questions protect the heart.

4. Jesus Exposes Worldly Leadership

When the other ten disciples hear about the request, they become angry. Their anger may sound righteous, but it probably also shows the same disease. They are angry because James and John asked first. The whole group needs correction. Jesus brings them together and says, "You know that they who are recognized as rulers over the nations lord it over them." He describes a pattern of leadership common in fallen human society: people with power use power to stay above others.

Jesus says clearly: "It shall not be so among you." This is one of the strongest leadership sentences in the New Testament. The church must not copy the leadership spirit of the world. In many places, leaders protect their status, demand honor, hide their failures, use fear, control money without accountability, and treat people as tools. Jesus forbids this spirit among His people.

This does not mean that the church has no authority. The New Testament teaches real leadership, real elders, real teaching, real discipline, and real responsibility. But authority in the church is authority under Christ, under the Word of God, and for the good of the flock. It is not personal ownership of people. It is not domination. It is stewardship.

Practical application for Uganda: In some churches and ministries, people may honor titles very strongly. Respect for elders and leaders can be a beautiful gift when it is shaped by Scripture. But respect becomes unhealthy when nobody may ask questions, when money is handled without honesty, when leaders cannot be corrected, or when members are afraid to speak the truth. A biblical leader welcomes accountability. He teaches people to obey Christ, not to depend on his personality. He uses authority to protect and build, not to control and threaten.

5. Sketchnote: The Shape of Servant Leadership

Use this sketchnote as a teaching pause. Ask students to look at the contrast: crown and domination are crossed out; towel, cross, shepherd care, prayer, and example are placed at the center. The picture should help them remember that kingdom leadership has a different shape from worldly leadership.

Sketchnote: Biblical Leadership – not to be served, but to serve.

6. The Way of Jesus: Servant and Slave of All

After rejecting worldly domination, Jesus gives the positive way: "Whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant. Whoever of you wants to become first among you shall be bondservant of all." Jesus does not only say, "Be nicer." He turns the whole meaning of greatness upside down. In the kingdom, greatness is measured by humble service.

The word "servant" points to active service. A servant notices needs and responds. The word "bondservant" or "slave" goes even lower. It speaks about a person who does not live for his own importance. Jesus uses strong language because pride is strong. He wants His disciples to

understand that leadership is not a ladder for the ego. It is a place where love carries weight for others.

Servant leadership is not weakness. It is strength under the Lordship of Christ. A servant leader still teaches truth. He still corrects sin. He still protects the weak. He still makes difficult decisions. But he does these things with a heart that belongs to Jesus. He does not correct to show power. He corrects to restore. He does not lead to be admired. He leads so people can grow. He does not protect his image. He protects the flock.

Application: Students should practice service before they desire position. Clean a room without announcing it. Visit a sick person without using the visit as a story to make yourself look spiritual. Prepare a Bible study carefully even if only three people come. Listen to a struggling believer without rushing to show your knowledge. Say sorry when you are wrong. Let your private obedience be stronger than your public gift. These small habits train the heart for larger responsibility.

7. The Center: The Son of Man Came to Serve

Mark 10:45 is the center of the passage: "For the Son of Man also came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus does not only give a leadership principle. He gives Himself. The reason leaders must serve is not because service is a clever method. The reason is that the Lord Himself came as the Servant King.

The title "Son of Man" points to the promised figure who receives dominion and glory in Daniel 7. Jesus has the right to all authority. Yet this glorious Son of Man walks the road of suffering. He serves sinners. He gives His life. The word "ransom" speaks of a price paid to bring release. Jesus gives His life for many. His death is not an accident. It is His saving mission. He leads us by dying for us.

The cross is not only the message a leader preaches. The cross is also the pattern by which a leader leads. We never become saviors. Only Jesus saves. But leaders who follow Jesus carry a cross-shaped life: humility, sacrifice, truth, forgiveness, patience, and costly love. A leader who preaches the cross but refuses the way of the cross becomes dangerous.

This is why biblical leadership must remain Christ-centered. If we teach leadership only as technique, we may produce skilled people with proud hearts. If we teach leadership from the cross, we call students to become men and women who are broken before God, filled with the Spirit, obedient to the Word, and useful for the church.

8. Shepherding Without Domination: 1 Peter 5:1-4

Peter gives a direct word to elders: shepherd the flock of God among you. Notice the words carefully. The church is not the leader's flock. It is God's flock. The people do not belong to the

pastor, the ministry founder, the teacher, or the strongest personality. They belong to God. This truth should make leaders humble and careful.

Peter gives three contrasts. Leaders must not serve under compulsion, but willingly. They must not serve for dishonest gain, but eagerly. They must not domineer over those entrusted to them, but become examples to the flock. These contrasts are very practical. A leader can become tired and serve with a hard heart. A leader can use ministry to seek money. A leader can use authority to push people down. Peter says the way of Christ is different.

The biblical leader does not stand over the flock as owner, but among the flock as shepherd and example. This does not remove leadership. It purifies leadership. A shepherd leads, feeds, guides, guards, and sometimes corrects. But he does so as one who will answer to the Chief Shepherd. Christ will appear, and every leader will give account to Him.

Application: A student preparing for ministry should learn to ask: Are people safer because I lead? Do they understand Scripture better? Are the weak protected? Are sinners called to repentance with tears and truth? Are young believers encouraged? Is money handled openly? Do I live the message I teach? Am I an example in prayer, marriage, sexual purity, speech, work, and humility? These questions are not small. They are part of shepherding.

9. The Mind of Christ: Philippians 2:3-8

Paul writes, "Do nothing through rivalry or through conceit, but in humility, each counting others better than himself." Then he points to Christ. Jesus existed in the form of God, yet He did not use His position for selfish advantage. He humbled Himself, took the form of a servant, became human, and obeyed to the point of death on a cross.

This passage takes us deep into the heart of Christian leadership. The leader must have the mind of Christ. Humility is not pretending that gifts do not exist. Humility is using every gift under God for the good of others. Humility does not say, "I am nothing, so I will do nothing." Humility says, "All I have is from God, so I will use it for Christ and His people."

A proud leader asks, "How can this make me greater?" A Christlike leader asks, "How can I help others become faithful to Jesus?" This changes how we preach, how we correct, how we lead meetings, how we handle conflict, and how we train younger believers. The mind of Christ must shape the tone, not only the doctrine.

Practical application: Before teaching, pray for love for the students, not only for a good lesson. Before correcting someone, ask whether your heart is angry pride or holy concern. Before accepting a leadership role, ask whether you are willing to do hidden work. Before speaking in a meeting, ask whether your words build unity and truth. Before making a decision, ask how it affects the weak, the poor, the young, and the wounded. This is not human softness. This is the mind of Christ applied to real ministry.

10. What Servant Leadership Looks Like in Daily Ministry

Servant leadership must become visible. If it stays only as an idea, it will not train students. Here are two simple lists for classroom discussion.

Wrong leadership patterns to reject:

- Using a title to demand respect while ignoring personal holiness.
- Controlling people through fear, shame, spiritual threats, or money.
- Preaching strongly in public but refusing correction in private.
- Serving only when people notice, praise, or give something in return.
- Treating church members as workers for the leader's dream instead of sheep belonging to Christ.

Christlike leadership habits to practice:

- Stay close to Jesus through Scripture, prayer, repentance, and obedience.
- Lead by example in small things before asking others to follow in large things.
- Protect the weak, listen carefully, and handle money and responsibility openly.
- Teach the Word clearly and apply it practically, without making yourself the center.
- Train others to serve, so the ministry depends more on Christ and His Word than on one personality.

These habits must be practiced in the home as well as in the church. A man who is gentle and holy in public but harsh and selfish at home is not yet leading like Jesus. A teacher who speaks about humility but refuses to serve fellow students is not yet understanding Mark 10. God often tests leadership in ordinary places: washing dishes, arriving on time, listening well, speaking truthfully, asking forgiveness, and keeping promises.

11. Main Application for the Students

The main application is simple but deep: every student must let Jesus redefine leadership. Leadership is not first a microphone, a title, a chair, a platform, or a special seat. Leadership begins when a person follows Jesus closely and helps others follow Him. Some students will become pastors. Some will lead families. Some will lead small groups. Some will mentor younger believers. Some will serve quietly in the church. In every place, the pattern is the same: not to be served, but to serve.

Before you ask God for influence, ask Him for a servant heart. Influence without character harms people. Gift without humility becomes dangerous. Authority without accountability becomes domination. But when Christ forms a servant heart, leadership becomes a gift to the church.

This week, each student should choose one practical act of hidden service. It should be something that helps another person but does not bring public praise. They should also choose one area where pride often appears: speaking, money, relationships, correction, family life, church service, or the desire to be known. Then they should pray daily: "Lord Jesus, make my leadership look like Your cross."

12. Class Discussion Questions

1. Why did James and John misunderstand the way of Jesus?
2. What does Jesus mean when He says, "It shall not be so among you"?
3. How can a leader have real authority without domination?
4. What is the difference between serving people and trying to please people?
5. Which leadership temptation is common in our churches or communities?
6. What hidden act of service can you practice this week?

13. Group Exercise

Divide the class into small groups. Give each group one situation and ask them to answer: What would worldly leadership do? What would servant leadership do? Which Bible truth guides the answer?

- A church member asks a difficult question about money in the ministry.
- A young believer falls into sin and is ashamed to come back to church.
- A leader receives praise after preaching and begins to feel superior.
- Two ministry workers disagree strongly during preparation for outreach.
- A pastor is tired and tempted to treat people as problems instead of sheep.

After discussion, let each group share briefly. The teacher should keep bringing the class back to Mark 10:45: Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and give His life.



14. Memory Statement

A biblical leader follows Jesus closely, serves people humbly, shepherds the flock faithfully, and leads by example under the authority of Christ.

15. Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the true Servant King. You came not to be served, but to serve and to give Your life as a ransom for many. Forgive us for pride, selfish ambition, fear of people, and desire for honor. Teach us to lead under Your Word, by Your Spirit, and for Your glory. Give us humble hearts, clean motives, courage for truth, love for the flock, and faithfulness in hidden places. Make us examples who point others to You. Amen.

16. Source Note for the Teacher

The lesson is built mainly on Mark 10:35-45, with 1 Peter 5:1-4 and Philippians 2:3-8 as focused parallel passages. Exegetical notes were checked against the NET Bible study notes, BibleProject chapter resources, and Bible.org material on 1 Peter 5 and shepherd leadership. The Bible text in the handout is from the World English Bible, public domain.