LEADING TRANSFORMATION #39:  
CAPACITY BUILDING-SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant Leadership has to do with the people aspect of Steward Leadership. Servant leaders build capacity for people in communities and organizations so that they are able to move from “good to great leaders.” To do so, Servant Leaders:

1. Create opportunities for growth through on-going training, and exposures.

2. Develop character and skills through coaching and training.

3. Motivate people toward ownership of vision and effective self-leadership.

4. Motivate people to do the right things and do things right.

5. Share the credit whenever teams do well by acknowledging their input.

6. Help people develop and serve from their strengths.

7. Help people discover and live out their life-calling.

Servant Leadership is God’s Way of leading, serving and supporting creation. God runs the largest service industry in the universe. It is usually taken for granted, but the laws that keep the planets and stars in their proper orbits are part of God’s service. We all as humans breathe to stay alive. The provision of air to humans, with the capacity to utilize it for respiratory purposes is also part of God’s service. It is possible to look at leadership as service.

Jesus Christ popularized the concept of Servant Leadership about 2,000 years ago. His statements on the subject have shaped leadership understanding and practice for generations past; and will continue to do so for generations to come. The following are just a few of His statements that have shaped the concept of Servant Leadership.

1. You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20: 25-28)

2. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Matthew 23: 11, 12)

Robert Greenleaf has been widely credited for popularizing Servant Leadership as an approach to leadership in both the religious and non-religious domains of society in modern times. Here are two statements from Greenleaf on Servant Leadership:

1. Servant Leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a just and caring world.

2. The Servant Leader is servant first.

Steward Leadership focuses on purposeful addition of value to human lives and other assets. It is more about intention and action. Servant Leadership on the other hand, is first an attitude, mindset, life and lifestyle. The Servant Leader has the mindset, attitude and life of giving preferential attention to others in matters of development. It is essentially sacrificial. The Servant Leader sacrifices personal interests in order to empower and develop others. This makes Servant Leadership a measure of character. It is not simply a leadership style preference that one adopts. It comes down to the heart, mind and character of the leader.

The Good News of the Christian faith is that the Spirit of the Living Christ continues to live and serve through those who allow Him into their lives. Whilst it may not be natural to put others first, Jesus can supernaturally live and lead through leaders today; enabling them to put the interests of others above their own. Effective Servant Leadership in this sense becomes a relational issue. It is more about learning to live and lead through the presence and power of the Spirit of God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:  
1. Are you a Servant at heart and by lifestyle?

2. In what ways do you need to grow in your understanding and practice of Servant Leadership?

3. What help would you need to connect more relationally with the person, power and principles of Jesus Christ, the greatest and living Servant Leader?