The Spiritual Dimensions of the Servant Leader

Dr. Brenda J. Williams, DSL, LCSW, ACSW
Intensive Outpatient Program Therapist
The Farley Center at Williamsburg Place
“Speak Life”

Music Video

TobyMac
Purpose

To introduce Servant Leadership as a relational approach to leading that can be easily integrated into one’s existing spiritual beliefs to form a spiritual dynamic that influences one’s professional and personal motives; it grounds our encounters with colleagues, patients and others based on the value: “serve first, then lead” (Greenleaf, 1977).
Goal #1

To show the connection between the spiritual dimension suggested in Servant Leadership (SL) theory and one’s existing spiritual beliefs.
Goal #2

To increase self-awareness of one’s spiritual person and it’s resulting influence on all activity that impact professional and personal relationships.
Goal #3

To provide and invite case examples for participants to apply servant leader qualities that reflect their spiritual beliefs.
Brief Overview of Leadership

Traditional Leaders of Hierarchal Organizations:
- Occupy top positions in the hierarchy
- Sole holder of authority and power
- Maintains an impersonal, distant relationship with followers
Brief Overview of Leadership

What is Traditional Leadership?

Traditional leaders generally make all decisions and holds all power. Organizational members expect traditional leaders to behave in this manner.
Brief Overview of Leadership

What is Shared Leadership?

“Shared leadership focuses not only on the leader but rather on clusters of individuals working and growing together. Leadership is seen as a function that operates within a group—not the property of a single individual but rather an activity in which many can participate” (Denhardt, Denhardt, & Aristigueta, 2002, p. 210).
Brief Overview of Leadership

Leaders of ‘Flat’ Organizations:

Share leadership responsibilities.

Share power and authority with organizational members.

Recognize all organizational members as potential leaders for the right situation.
What is Servant Leadership?

Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership model, a shared leadership approach in which leaders and followers interchangeably share leadership responsibility, emphasizes the primary role of leaders as servants first, which then, follows the conscious choice to lead.
Who is the Servant Leader?

“The servant leader is servant first...it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first”. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (Greenleaf, 1977., p. 27).
Who is the Servant Leader?

According to Greenleaf, “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” (1977, p. 13).
Who is the Servant Leader?

- To test if one is a true servant leader, one might ask:

- “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servant leaders? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?” (Greenleaf, 1977)
Who Is the Servant Leader?

- Servant leaders exhibit agapao or moral love that exist between humans for one another.

- Agapao love, distinct from agape love, involves “Doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason” (Winston, 2002, p. 5)
Who is the Servant Leader?

Servant leaders transport agapao love beyond the walls of the church....

into the hearts of humanity
“Caring deeply for this institution, [your place of employment]... means that you are personally dedicated to making of it a thing of beauty—in contemporary terms—something that raises you as a person to a stature you would not achieve alone or in a less committed relationship. These are things it will require of you as individuals: when it is appropriate for you to lead, you will lead; where it is appropriate for you to follow, you will follow” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 256).
Servant Leaders need to become spiritually formed in the beliefs and values necessary to express the deep caring capacity for others and for the organizations in which they affiliate.
Spirituality includes two essential elements in a person’s life:

1) Transcendence of self, manifesting in a sense of calling or destiny, and

2) Belief that one’s activities have meaning and value beyond economic benefits or self-gratification. (Fry, 2003)
Spiritual Formation of the Servant Leader

Values that result from one’s spiritual calling and characterize the servant leader include:

- vision (i.e., defining the destination, reflecting high ideals, and encouraging hope/faith),
- altruistic love (i.e., forgiveness, kindness, integrity, empathy, honesty, patience, courage, trust, and humility),
- and hope/faith (i.e., endurance, perseverance, and expectation of reward/victory). (Fry, 2003)

honesty/truthfulness, trust, humility, forgiveness, compassion, thankfulness, service, and stillness/peace—that are essential for enabling spiritual ideals to thrive and to grow in modern organizations. (Kriger & Hanson, 1999)
Spiritual Formation of Servant Leader

Spiritual Formation is bound up in the reality that the aspiring SL experiences intimately with God, the power source greater than oneself.

Greenleaf suggests the SL derives strength through this spiritual encounter described as:

‘Entheos’

‘en’-within + ‘theos’-spirit
Spiritual Formation of Servant Leader

“Entheos is seen as a basic spiritual essence. It is the sustaining force that holds one together under stress. It is the support to venturesome risk-taking action. It provides the prod of conscience that keeps one open to knowledge when the urge to be comfortable would close the door. It provides a linking concept by which whatever religious beliefs one has are kept in contact with one’s attitudes and actions in the world of practical affairs. It nurtures a powerful concept of the self.” Greenleaf (1977, p. 82).
So, how does self-knowledge or self-awareness contribute to leader development?

Self-awareness helps leaders to “know their fears and have courage to act wisely despite them” (Barr & Barr, 1994, p. 436).
Spiritual Formation of the Servant Leader

Although you cannot escape the influence of personal, social, cultural, and religious experiences that shape who you are,

You can **unlearn behaviors** that are not conducive to your spiritual formation as a servant leader.
Spiritual Formation of the Servant Leader

Finding Your USP - Unique Selling Point

Your Spiritual gifts distinguish you from all others in the entire universe.
Are You a Servant Leader?

- Case Studies
Summary

From a servant leader perspective, the dynamics of leading is:

Always love-based
Operates in the context of community
Moves on a spiritual identity that exhibits loving concern
Motivates and inspires growth and development in others
Draws power delegated from a Higher Authority
Other focused with no self-agenda
Why is Servant Leadership Necessary?

“I believe that caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is what makes a good society” (Greenleaf, 1996, p. 51)
Resources

Locate motivational gifts test at www.giffttest.org (DellaVecchio, n. d.)
Locate servant leader assessment at www.modernservantleader.com (free)

Read “The Parable of the Dancing God”, by Dr. Baxter Kruger

Read Greenleaf’s essay “The Servant as Leader” (1977)


References

Appendix A

Characteristics of the Servant Leader

1. Listening- The servant leader listens intently to others to determine the will of the people and also listens to one’s own inner voice.

2. Empathy- The servant leader shows care and concern for others and strives to understand and to recognize their uniqueness; they may reject performance or behavior but accepts the person.

3. Healing- The servant leader “recognize they have the opportunity to “‘help make whole’” those with whom they have contact” (p.5).

4. Awareness- The servant leader shows awareness to discover and seeks a holistic view of the situation, sometimes disturbing the status quo.

5. Persuasion-Servant leaders rely on persuasion rather than coercion or authority to convince others.

6. Conceptualization-Servant leaders have vision and “nurture their abilities to dream great dreams” while maintaining a realistic balance” (Spears, 2002 p. 6).

7. Foresight-Servant leaders with foresight “understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future” (p.7).

8. Stewardship-Servant leaders hold themselves accountable for serving the needs of others.

9. Commitment to the growth of people-Servant leaders recognize the intrinsic value of all people and are deeply committed to their growth.

10. Building community- Servant leaders seek to create an atmosphere of community among those who work in business and other institutions.