



I saw something at a wedding a few years ago that I've never seen before or since. In the middle of the ceremony, the groom sat down in a chair and the bride tenderly and lovingly washed his feet. While it was unusual, it seemed reasonable in light of verses about the "helpmate" being "submissive" and "respectful." The real surprise followed—the groom in this male-dominant society traded places with his bride and washed her feet. As I observed this unique event, it occurred to me that the most powerful leaders in the world today would never do that, but one man, the greatest of all, before whom *all* leaders will bow, washed the feet of his disciples. "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," and, incidentally, washed her feet.

Leighton Ford, in his book, *Transforming Leadership*, observed, "Next to truth, the power question is the most important issue for the leader. And it is precisely in relation to power that the leadership of Jesus stands in greatest contrast to popular understandings of leadership" (p. 140). The Son of God washed the feet of man, and said that we should follow his example, and that we would be blessed if we did (John 13:15-17).

Robert K. Greenleaf coined the modern term, *servant leadership*, in his seminal work, *The Servant as Leader* (1970). This kind of leader is motivated by a sincere desire to serve others, not power, possession, prestige or position. His fulfillment comes from developing others and building shared vision to make a real difference. Greenleaf offers a test of servant leadership: "Do those served grow as persons, do they while being served become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous (self-reliant), more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not be further deprived?"

Read John 13:1-17.

1. In John 13:1-3, what characteristics of Jesus were prerequisite for Him to wash the disciples feet?
2. Read John 13:4-5 and imagine it is the first time you have heard this story. What is your reaction? What does it make you think about Jesus?
3. Read John 13:6-11 and compare Peter's two reactions. Which one resonates with you? Why?
4. Read John 13:12-17. What is Jesus saying about leadership? Is this exclusive to ministry or could it have application on the secular stage as well?
5. Read Mark 10:41-45. Describe the contrasting styles of leadership in this passage. Think of a current situation that illustrates each style and evaluate them together.
6. Dr. Martin Luther King makes our final inquiry: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"

*"Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others.
Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 2:4-5 NIV)*