

Excerpts from Section 4, Lesson 12 – Leadership, Innovation and Emerging Practices Christian Global Health in Perspective, edited by Rebecca Meyer

Christ-like Leadership

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles Lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so among you. Instead, whoever wants to be first must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:35–45)

Have this in mind among yourselves, which is your in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:5–8)

It is within this biblical picture of servant leadership that Christ-centered healthcare takes its directives. The healing ministry of Jesus was clearly a servant-like and other-centered ministry. “And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them.” (Matthew 15.30). The servant healing ministry of Jesus started with his Incarnation, was manifest in his life, death, and resurrection – setting a supreme example and ongoing presence in the church now and until his return. It is this Incarnational servant spiritual and healing ministry, which is key to whole-person health care and community-based ministry as we see from the life of Jesus. Further it is key to transformative multiplication of people, churches, and ministry.

Preparing the Heart to Serve

The Christ-like or servant-leader is a servant first. It begins with the Spirit-prompted willingness to serve followed by a conscious choice to lead. The best indication of success is that those served and led grow as persons. They become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more just, showing signs that they themselves are becoming servant-leaders. They show a particular concern for the least privileged or most vulnerable in society.

Christ-like character is the product of a life that is genuinely submitted to Jesus Christ and His word, just as Jesus the Son of God submitted to the Father. Leadership begins with *follower-ship*. The first step in the leadership development process for Jesus’ disciples was to obey His call to “follow me.” Only the one who has learned to follow is qualified to lead. Only the one who has learned to listen to God through meditation on the word of God and learning to recognize the promptings of the Spirit of God is prepared to speak for God. Submission requires humility and obedience.

The most important biblical principle for a Christ-like or servant-leader is love. This is not a love as the world knows it, but a love that puts God and neighbor first. It is a love that knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen (1 Cor 13:7–8). This agape-like love shows itself in compassionate care for the whole person, especially those who are marginalized and/or suffering. “*And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep (Luke 7:13).’*” This was Jesus’ response to a widow who had lost her only son.

Empathy is also important to develop in healthcare and global health ministry so that believers do not become mechanical or calloused to those they are called to serve. And this can only be a reality when those in ministry are skilled listeners.

According to Greenleaf, (1977/2002, 27) who is an expert in this area, the Christ-like or servant-leader includes at least these 10 characteristics which are derived from the example of Jesus' ministry:

1. Listening – “Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.” (James 1:19) Listening is easy to talk about but hard to do but this is an indispensable character quality for leaders.
2. Compassion – “*And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep’*” (Luke 7:13). This was Jesus' response to a widow who had lost her only son. Empathy is important to develop in the healing arts and not grow mechanical or calloused to those we are called to serve.
3. Healing (and Restoration) – Though we cannot completely replicate the ministry model of Jesus we can show the healing and compassion of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). Note Jesus' response to this story as to how to “*Love our Neighbors,*” was to, “*go and do likewise.*” (Luke 10:37). We must work to continually develop wholistic healing and the skill of loving our neighbor sacrificially like Jesus. In like manner the fullness of Jesus's ministry focus is illustrated in the story of the woman with 12 years of bleeding in Luke 8:43–48 (paralleled in Mark 5:25–34). Not only did the woman receive physical healing but also healing of her mind, and spirit and was restored to her relationships with family and her community (*shalom*).
4. Awareness – Jesus was at times crushed by crowds wanting to see and/or be healed by him. Jesus said when a woman with long term bleeding problems touched him, “*Someone has touched me.*” (Luke 8:46) Though we may not know that power has gone from us like Jesus, we can feel depleted at times. We can learn to be aware of our surroundings and the prompting and power of the Holy Spirit to respond to people's needs. But we also must be aware of the need to take care of ourselves and renew our strength. Jesus demonstrated this from the outset of His ministry by getting away, alone with His Father at all hours of the night (Mark 1:35). Honoring the Sabbath is not a recommendation but a commandment!
5. Persuasion – As leaders we will have to bring people together and empower them. “*Jesus called his disciples together and gave them authority to drive out demons and to cure diseases and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*” (Luke 9:1–2) The ability to persuade came as He developed strong, non-coercive relationships with His disciples and then gave them specific requirements for going out to preach and heal (Luke 9:3–5). This should be the same for servant-leaders.
6. Conceptualization – To conceptualize is really to see that which is not yet there but what can be in the future. Jesus was going through towns and was preaching and healing and had compassion on the people and said, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.*” (Matt 9:35–38) Though Jesus as the Son of God had access to knowledge about the future, he was also the Son of Man and at times did not know all information. We can learn from Jesus how to conceptualize for a preferable future.
7. Foresight – Foresight is having some insight into what might certainly happen. Jesus knew his message would bring opposition and he said so. “*Be on your guard; you will be handed over to*

the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues." (Matt 10:17 NIV; but the whole passage of 10:5–42 addresses this issue in more detail) Jesus not only knew this through providential insight but given the normal response to the gospel and the news he was bringing. Leaders need this same type of foresight to give to their followers.

8. Stewardship – This is not just ownership of resources but how they are managed. This is clearly addressed by Jesus in several parables (Luke 16:1–13) but Jesus' summary point was, *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."* Stewardship is not just about money or buildings but also about the management of people.
9. Commitment to Growth of People – The Apostle Peter finished out the second of his letters to a persecuted church by saying, *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (2 Pet 3:18) The summary statement of these two letters is this: keep growing. It is leaders who keep this growth moving forward and multiplying.
10. Building Community – All of the Epistles of the New Testament address this challenge of building community. The Apostle Paul addresses this clearly in his first book to the church in Thessalonica where he writes, *"We always thank God for all the mentioning of you in our prayers."* (1 Thess 1:2). Then later he states, *"we loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well because you had become so dear to us."* (1 Thess 2:8) Praying for those we are in community with and showing our love builds and is part of leading a community of grace.

When leaders are genuinely listening to God, and keeping in step with the Spirit of God, they will naturally find themselves in tune with one another as well. Jesus prayed that His followers would be one as the Father and Son were one, and that their complete unity would show the world that God loved them and had sent Christ (John 17:20–23). The proof to the world that the disciples were genuinely followers of Jesus would be their love for one another, the same love that Jesus had showed to them (John 13:34, 35). The primary mark of the Christ-like leader, then, will be his/her love for other disciples of Jesus, including other Christian leaders.

The Christ-like leader doesn't settle for simple knowledge (Greek; *gnosis*) such as the fact that there are too few surgeons serving in Africa but seeks deeper knowledge (*epignosis*) which is also informed by greater understanding (*sunesis*) of the reasons behind the complex challenge being considered. This leads to wisdom (*sophia*) in how to act to overcome the challenge (Colossians 1:9 plus most all of Proverbs 1, which goes even deeper into these concepts). This will also equip the leader to better understand the times and cultures within which they are living and serving, fulfilling the role once practiced by the Sons of Issachar (1Chronicles 12:32) who understood the times to know the best course for Israel to take.

In Hebrews 10:25, the author states:

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." But we are also living and participating in the larger system of our cultural context where we are called to be the salt and light that the world needs.