



CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP FOUNDATIONS

*Passion Two:*

**Love**

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*from grace to sway*

THE SEVEN PASSIONS OF BIBLICAL LEADERS

# study 1

## Introduction to LOVE for Christian influencers

### **Now it's getting weird. Talking about love in a course on leadership.**

We associate love with romance and with families and maybe even with pets. But it's not a word we use liberally with leadership. Love is about passion and heart and even abandonment. These are not emotions and actions that mesh well with level-headed leadership.

I can still remember when I fell in love with the beautiful young woman who has been my wife for over 40 years. I put up a huge photo of her above my desk in the male-only Maths' staffroom at the high school where I was teaching. This made me an object of ridicule, but I didn't care. I was in love, so it didn't matter what people thought of me or how ridiculous my actions were.

Of course, the concept of love is wider and deeper than this kind of loving infatuation. But still, how does it find a foundational place in the Operating System of Christian leadership?

### **God, love and us**

The Apostle John makes it clear that love is at the very heart of God and of our relationship with him. God really loves us and has shown this in sending Jesus as our representative sacrifice. He says:

**Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:7-10)**

It's difficult for us to grasp the immensity of God's love for us and for all his creation. Adam and Eve, who were perfect and enjoyed an intimate relationship with God, were duped by Satan's lie

that God didn't really want what was best for them (Gen. 3:4-5). If it was difficult for Adam and Eve to believe that God really loved them, how much more difficult it is for broken people like us to really know the depth and breadth of God's love for us. But grasping God's love is extremely important. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would know the unknowable – God's immense and incredible love:

**God's love for us is not a temporary thing. His love is eternal, it will never be exhausted.**

**And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.** (Eph. 3:17-19)

God's love for us is not a temporary thing. He is no fly-by-night lover. God's love is eternal. It will never be exhausted. Nothing will ever separate us from the love of God. We will be saturated by God's immense love forever. As Paul says:

**For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** (Rom. 8:38-39)

As God's love pervades our life, it inevitably changes the way we see others. We can't help but love them. In fact, John reckons that our love for others is the sign that we have received God's love, and hatred for others is clear evidence that we don't really love God. These are strong words, but it's difficult to interpret John's writing in any other way:

**Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us... We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.** (1 John 4:11-12, 19-21)

Love for others is one of the defining evidences of Christian faith. It's the way that everyone can see we are following Jesus, that we are different from others. Jesus made this clear:

**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.** (John 13:34-35)

But not only does our love for others show that we truly love God and are encompassed by his love,

it must also be the motivation for all our ministry. No matter how spectacular and successful our ministry might be, if it is not inspired by love, we are completely wasting our time. We can have fantastic gifts and incredible knowledge. We can make huge sacrifices. But without love it means nothing. This is what Paul says:

**If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.** (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Well that's pretty clear-cut. We can't talk about influence without talking about love. Love is foundational. Love must pervade our relationships with those who allow us to influence them. If love is not driving what we do, then God says that all our effort is worthless.

So this is how it goes: **God immensely loves us.** Having received and experienced this love, we deeply love others, especially those we are seeking to influence. Love for God and love for others drives our ministry. LOVE is an essential aspect of our influence Operating System. Christians of influence love strongly and deeply.

Yet I must admit that I have rarely seen LOVE mentioned in the Christian leadership literature. Maybe the word is too misunderstood or too difficult to define. But surely LOVE has to play a crucial role in any theology of influence/leadership.

Let me say it unmistakably: **Christian leaders love those whom they influence.** Responding to God's incredible love by expressing love for others is essential for those who influence God's way. It's our second foundational biblical value and passion.

## **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 2.1**

Pray Paul's prayer for the Ephesians for yourself:

**"I pray that, being rooted and established in love, I may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that I may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."**

Drink in the incredible love of God for you.

## study 2

# Servant Leadership

**Perhaps I've been too hard on the leadership literature when it comes to love.** While these sources seldom mention LOVE, most Christian authors writing about influence do consistently refer to "servant leadership," which really is love in action. Serving is the practical outworking of love. We show our love for others by serving them.

For example, God showed his love for us by serving us in the sending of Jesus to save us.

**This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for us.** (1 John 4:9-10)

The way we show that we love those we are seeking to influence is by serving them. While none of us have completely pure motives, Christians don't fundamentally influence because they crave authority, desire significance or aspire to achievement. It's not even because they want God's work to prosper. Christians influence because they know that they are called by Christ's GRACE (see the previous passion) and because they deeply care for (LOVE) those they influence. Like Jesus, they show this love by sacrificing their lives for those who follow them. It's a loving desire to serve people that drives real Christian influence.

An emphasis on influence by serving is prevalent throughout the New Testament. Here are some examples:

- **You know 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 be 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.** (Matt. 20:25-28)
- **You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one**

**another's feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.** (John 13:13-17)

- **For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.** (2 Cor. 4:5)
- **You, my brothers and sister, were called to be free. But do not indulge your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.** (Gal. 5:13)
- **Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in all its various forms.** (1 Pet. 4:10)

If you want a biblical description of what a loving, serving leader looks like, then Paul's beautiful picture of the outworking of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is a great place to start. I will substitute the phrase "Christian of influence" for "love" in this passage.

**[Christians of influence] are patient and kind. They do not envy, do not boast, and are not proud. [A Christian of influence] is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs. [A Christian of influence] does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. [A Christian of influence] always protects, always trust, always hopes, and always perseveres.** (1 Cor. 13:4-7)

I realise that this is a high ideal. But Jesus goes further. He not only calls us to show this type of love to our friends and followers, but also to our enemies (Lk. 6:27). Genuinely loving those we are seeking to influence is a good place to start.

## The influencer as shepherd

Jesus drew concrete images of concepts he was teaching to help people understand. When speaking about influence as a form of serving others, he borrowed an Old Testament metaphor – that of the influencer as a shepherd. Jesus' idea was that just as a shepherd's job was to care for and look after their sheep, not to pursue their own agenda, so those who influence others for God will prioritise the needs of those they serve over their own needs. They will focus on serving their sheep.

Jesus saw himself as a shepherd. His serving role as a shepherd would even mean ultimately giving up his life for his sheep as a good shepherd would do. As Jesus said:

**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.** (John 10:11-12)

## Because of his love, Jesus confronted and called his followers to costly commitment so that they could become the people God intended.

**That's the standard of serving that Jesus calls us to.** We are to love those we influence so much that we are willing to serve them with everything we have. Peter appealed to the influencers/leaders (elders) in the churches in Turkey to be good shepherds. This involved setting aside their own agenda and serving as an example to their flock. Here is what he wrote:

**Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.** (1 Pet. 5:2-3)

## How do you both serve and influence?

In some ways, serving and influencing appear to be contradictory concepts. Serving seems to involve caring and submitting and supporting, whereas influencing seems to involve leading and directing and challenging. It would appear that the more you serve, the less you will be able to actually influence, and the more you try to influence, the less you will serve.

**Jesus was both a servant and an influencer.**

But this is a false dichotomy. Jesus was both a servant and an influencer. **He loved and served his disciples and yet also led them to God's purposes for them.** He nurtured them and cared for them: answering their questions, looking after their needs, and encouraging their ministry. But he also directed them: teaching and growing them, challenging and disciplining them, and calling them to a life of sacrifice.

**There is a big difference between being a servant and being a doormat.** Doormats do what others want. Their goal is to please and appease those they serve. Christians of influence have a different agenda when they serve. They don't want to do what pleases others, but they want God's best for them. They have the best interests of those they serve at heart. Often this means doing what those they influence want, but at other times it means going against their wishes and calling them away from their selfish desires to God's way.

Jesus was no doormat. He confronted and called his followers to costly commitment so that they could become the people God intended. He loved them so deeply that he wasn't interested in just pleasing them. It may seem arrogant to say as a leader that you know what is best for others, but

that is part of the challenge of influence.

Tom Landry (a committed Christian and prominent American Football coach) put it like this: *"[An influencer] tells you what you don't want to hear and has you see what you don't want to see, so that you can be who you've always known you could be."* Servant leaders need to care enough for those they influence to challenge impeding behavior and to cast a vision for something better, calling for change.

**But Christian influence is first serving and second leading.** This is the crunch issue. It's what Jesus was getting at when he talked about serving being fundamental to greatness. If influencing is more important to you than serving, then inevitably those who follow you will be serving your agenda. Now this agenda may be very worthwhile, but it will meet your needs/dreams/desires first and their needs second. This is not God's way.

**If influencing is more important than serving, you will make those that follow serve your agenda. This is not Gods way.**

I have seen capable leaders who, in pushing their healthy dreams and passions, achieve great goals. Of course, it can be done. In fact, my observation is that few leaders in our world are really servants first. But servant leadership is what Jesus expects. Listen again to his words: **"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant"** (Matt. 20:26).

We don't practise serving to broaden our influence; to make people like us so that they will follow our lead. We are Jesus' people and serving comes first. But we want to make our serving more effective and we do this by seeking to influence them towards God's way.

## **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 2.2**

If you want to follow Jesus' call to be a servant of others, here are some questions you must ask. Journal your responses.

1. Am I truly wanting to serve those whom I am influencing? Is this my deepest desire?
2. How do I know? Are those who I influence aware of my love for them and their importance to me? How do they know that this is true?
3. Are those who I influence growing? How do I know?

## study 3

# What does a servant influencer focus on?

**A little further on, I will offer some practical advice on how to show your love to those you are seeking to influence.** But at this point I will just suggest some broad direction. When you love someone and are therefore seeking to serve them, you often show it in the following ways:

**1. You're interested in and want to know about their personal lives.** You want to know how they're going and what they're facing. You're interested in their circumstances, their family, the pressures they are under outside your relationship, and the fun they find in life. You want to know what motivates them and what disappoints them.

**2. You're concerned for their total well-being: their physical, emotional, relational and spiritual health.** You want them to do well in life and you know that they need to be healthy in each of these areas. You work for their health and blessing.

**3. You offer sacrificial service that comes at a cost to you.** You sacrifice your own agenda and desires so that you can serve their needs.

Of course, it's not possible to do this on every occasion. You have many priorities in and demands on your life, but when the opportunity arises, you willingly make the sacrifices. It shows that you genuinely love.

**4. You give attention to their opinions, ideas, and concerns.** You genuinely want to know what they think and how they feel. While you can't always do what they want, it's not from lack of knowing what they're thinking and what they're looking for.

**A servant leader sacrifices their own agenda so they can serve their followers needs.**

**5. You recognise the contribution they are making and encourage them** for the good things you see coming out of their life and ministry. You're quick to find things that you can cheer about and you try to remain as positive as you can about them and their potential.

**6. You have a passion for and commitment to their growth and development.** You dream of what they could be (often when they cannot see it themselves) and you invest in helping them become all that God intends. This involves providing wisdom and direction for them, opening opportunities to help them develop, and networking them with people and resources that can help them.

**7. You are honest with them and challenge them to be more.** You don't shy away from tackling tough issues. You care enough to confront the problems and barriers to growth in their life and ministry. You are gentle but firm. You know that some of their most significant growth will come through owning up to and dealing with failures and weaknesses.

I don't want to scare you off. This LOVE thing sounds like a lot of effort. And it is. That's why we don't see more of it in leadership. None of us have got loving others completely right. We're all on a journey. But Jesus makes LOVE fundamental, so that's why I've put it as part of the Operating System. It's essential to grasp and practise LOVE.

But remember that LOVE will not primarily grow by our trying harder. We do need to make an effort, but it's recognising how deeply God loves us that really enables us to love others. If we doubt God's love or draw back from his love, then genuinely loving and serving those we influence will be virtually impossible. As we seek to build the passion of LOVE into our influence, our first prayer should be, **"Lord Jesus, may I grasp how wide and long and high and deep is your love, and may I really experience this love."**

## Drawing boundaries

To serve people effectively without being a hostage to their wants, you need to be able to draw boundaries. The inability of someone who genuinely loves to carefully draw boundaries will lead to poor stewardship of time and energy and the inability to provide service for others. Because we have limited resources, we need to be able to ensure that these resources go to the places where they are most needed and effective. This means that we have to decide where our resources will go and not have this important decision made by the people we are serving, who may feel that their need is greater and more urgent than anyone else's. Good stewardship of the resources God gives us necessarily involves an influencer drawing boundaries.

Jesus was constantly under pressure to meet the needs of the people he was serving. They wanted healing. They wanted deliverance. They wanted to

**Good stewardship involves us drawing boundaries.**

hear his teaching. They wanted to see more miracles. Some of their needs were legitimate, and because Jesus cared so deeply, he often put aside his own agenda and needs to meet their needs.

For example, in Mark 6 after the disciples has been out on mission, they returned excited but exhausted. Jesus decided that it was important for them to get away as a group in order to debrief and be refreshed. But lots of people saw them heading off, worked out where they were going, and raced there ahead of Jesus and his disciples. See how Mark describes the situation and the result:

**So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.** (Mark 6:32-34)

In this situation, motivated by deep compassion, Jesus intentionally put aside his own agenda to serve the needs of the crowd. But this was not always the case. On other occasions, Jesus sent the crowds away, despite their pressing needs. Matthew records one such situation:

**Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.** (Matt. 14:22-23)

Here Jesus recognises his need to spend time alone with God in prayer, so he stops his ministry, dismisses everyone and heads off up the mountain. I'm sure many in the crowd were unhappy with his call. They wanted more. But Jesus chose to draw the boundary and do what was best for him and his long-term ministry. He could not afford to be held hostage by the wishes of the crowd.

**So drawing boundaries is a balancing act.** Some of us (myself included) find it quite easy to draw boundaries. We have strong personal agendas (hopefully from God) and we don't like the needs of others to interfere with our program. We readily say no to those looking for our time or help or attention. Such influencers have to learn that being a servant often means abandoning our own agenda to care for others (like Jesus).

Others of us have loving servant hearts that are often moved with compassion. We strongly feel the needs of others and readily abandon our own plans to help them. If this is you, God is really pleased with your sacrificial attitude, but you are in danger of not using your resources effectively and not looking after your own spiritual, emotional and relational health. **If you cannot learn to say no (like Jesus), you will waste a lot of your precious time and probably burn out and have to pull back from leadership.**

**Drawing boundaries is a balancing act.**

To follow God's call to be a long-term servant, you will need to learn to draw healthy boundaries. It's the only way to continue influencing with LOVE under a lot of people and ministry pressure.

### **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 2.3**

1. Do you tend to draw boundaries that are too strong (and therefore limit how available you are to serve others) or do you tend to find it difficult to draw boundaries (and therefore limit your ability to be a good steward of the resources God has given you)?
2. Is there something you can do immediately to improve your boundary setting?

## study 4

### Who do we serve?

We serve everyone of course. There are no limitations on Jesus' call to serve. We are to love all those who God places around us, even our enemies. Jesus gave clear instructions:

**Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.** (Luke 6:27-29)

But because we have limited resources, it is impossible for us to put the same amount of love and therefore service into everyone. As explained above, this means drawing boundaries so that our time and energy are not dispersed according to the wants/needs of others. It also means proactively choosing people whom we are especially committed to serving.

Now your initial reaction to this may be a feeling of injustice. Why should some people get our special attention? How can we choose some over others? Surely, we need to treat everyone alike. Everyone should have equal access to our love and influence. Doesn't James say that we are not to play favourites (Jam. 2:1-13)?

Well yes, James is clear that we should not give preference to someone because they are more wealthy or attractive. We have to love and respect all people (Jam. 2:8). But our finite resources mean that we have to make choices. We do this when we commit to a marriage partner. While we seek to love everyone, because of our marriage covenant our spouse will get more of our love and service.

Jesus loved all people intensely, but he still chose 12 apostles from among his disciples to particularly invest in:

**One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.** (Luke 6:12-13)

These 12 received more of Jesus' time, teaching, support and assistance.

Similarly, Jesus has given us some people who he particularly wants us to influence. They may be wealthy or poor, educated or uneducated, old or young, but we are to recognise who these people are and to find significant time to serve them. Usually we don't wait for them to come to us. We pray about it and seek them out. **So what can we do to love them?**

**Jesus has given us some people who he particularly wants us to influence.**

## 20 ways to show love

Christians of influence will show their love in different and unique ways, but I promised that I would provide a few practical ideas that may get you thinking about what you are doing or could do to serve those you are called by God to influence. This is not an exhaustive list. I'm sure you do many other things to serve people.

### **Here are 20 things I have tried (not always successfully):**

- 1.** Write encouragement notes or emails. I often do this just around Christmas time, but any time is good.
- 2.** Pass on positive affirmations that you hear from others. Unfortunately, I'm not a great encourager, but I can and do pass on what others say.
- 3.** Show people that you are interested in them by visiting them in their workplace or in their home.
- 4.** Find regular opportunities to explore personal/family life with those you are serving.
- 5.** Take people out for a meal (or coffee if you are poor) to talk about their work/ministry/life.
- 6.** Ring or visit people instead of texting or emailing or messaging them.
- 7.** Ask people for personal prayer points, pray for them, and then follow through on how things have gone.
- 8.** Socialise with the people you are leading. Hang out with them. Have fun with them.
- 9.** Offer to pay for resources that will help others grow (seminars, conferences, books, etc.).
- 10.** Be personally honest with followers when they are out of line, but don't embarrass them in public.
- 11.** Encourage, encourage, encourage.
- 12.** Stop to pray for needs when people share them.
- 13.** Listen carefully to what others are saying and show them that they have been heard.
- 14.** Give public credit to others.
- 15.** Put your personal agenda aside when significant needs of others emerge.
- 16.** Protect your team members from bullies (within or without).
- 17.** Try to help those you are influencing to be successful in what they are doing, especially when they are trying something new.
- 18.** Talk about the potential you see in those you influence.

**You are absolutely called to love those that you serve.**

**19.** Apologise when you may have reacted poorly or handled a situation badly.

**20.** Visit people at home when they are going through a tough time (e.g. sickness, loss).

## What stops us showing our LOVE?

This passion of LOVE sounds pretty simple. It's not really hard to work out how to love and serve. And for some of us, it really is very natural. But most of us struggle somewhat to serve others. Why is this the case? Here are a few possible reasons with my responses:

**1. We don't know this is God's call.** Well I think we've seen that God's call to serve is absolutely clear. You just can't ignore it if you are seeking to influence God's way.

**2. We don't know what to do.** I think this is often the case. I hope that you now have thought of many ways in which you can serve the people you are influencing.

**3. We try, but it's not important to us because we don't love others much.** If this is the case, according to 1 John 4, you have not sensed the deep love of God for you. Maybe you should focus on this and let God change your heart.

**4. We don't really want to.** There is no choice in this for God's children. As John said, "Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:8).

**5. We don't have the time.** Loving and serving well is often time-consuming, but some of the ideas suggested above don't take a lot of time. Maybe start with them. Of course, you may have to rearrange your priorities if you have no time to serve those you are influencing.

**6. We prefer to focus on tasks.** I sympathise with this reason. I am very task-oriented and often prefer to work at projects than to be with people. God makes us different, so some will find it easier and more natural to love and serve. But your Christian influence will be severely curtailed if you don't give time to LOVE.

**7. We don't think that others need it.** Maybe some people need to be loved more than others, but God made us all with the need to be loved. None of us are sufficient by ourselves. As we offer LOVE to others, we act on God's behalf.

### **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 2.4**

1. How do you actually show love to the people you are seeking to influence?
2. Can you add further ideas to the list above?

## study 5

# How LOVE serves followers

**How then do those we influence benefit from our LOVE and consequent service?** How will our influence grow as we genuinely LOVE the people God places around us?

### 1. Security

Knowing that God loves us provides a great deal of security for us. Because God's love is based on his choice and not our abilities or responses, we can be sure that we will be safe in God's love forever. Whether we succeed or fail, whether we obey or sin, whether we do well or badly, God will keep on loving us. Nothing can separate us from God's love. We really are completely safe.

Similarly, our love for others helps them to feel a deep sense of security. They know that they are loved for themselves and not just appreciated for what they can contribute to the mission. They can be themselves because they know that we will continue to serve them by appreciating, encouraging, listening, valuing, challenging and supporting them, even if they fail. They don't have to earn our approval because they can see that they are unconditionally loved.

Being genuinely loved helps bring a sense of peace to a person's heart. It allows them to relax, rest, recuperate and renew. People who are genuinely loved feel secure enough to let their guard down, to be honest about their thoughts and feelings, and to be influenced by others. And they will often return the love they feel.

### 2. Significance

When people find that the person they are following is truly motivated by love for them and desire to serve them, they understand that they are personally significant. They feel that they are not merely part of the furniture - a cog in some great God-given dream or a pawn in a leader's personal plan. But instead they feel valued and valuable, not simply for what they can contribute, but foremost for who they are. They know they are loved and therefore are respected and significant.

I'm sure that this is how the disciples felt when Jesus washed their feet. I can imagine them thinking, "Wow, the Messiah is washing my feet. He must really love me. I must be significant to him. He must see something in me."

As you serve followers, their developing sense of significance will often grow their loyalty and commitment to you. If they feel that you are deeply concerned about them, they will be more likely to listen to what you say and follow you to difficult places.

Security and significance are wonderful gifts to offer those we influence. Very few people grow up with the benefits of unconditional love, so when they receive LOVE from those who are important in their lives, it awakens in them deep security and significance. No wonder the leaders that LOVE best often have the most committed followers.

**It is almost impossible to offer love, security and significance to others if you are not secure in yourself and don't understand your own personal significance.** We are deeply loved by God. We are significant and special to God. So our security and value do not come from the accolades we receive from other people (even when we influence with a servant heart) or from our success and achievements, but from the knowledge that God loves us and has gifted us to serve him by serving others.

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committed followers.**

**If those we influence are not yet Christians, it is still important to serve them.** God has made them with potential and a purpose and he has brought us into their lives to help them grow and develop. He is concerned about every aspect of their lives. We are called to be "salt" and "light" to them (Matt. 5:13-16). The parables about "lost" things (Luke 15) show us that God has a great concern for lost people, and is particularly interested in bringing them home.

## My personal reflection

In every evaluation of my leadership style that I have undertaken, I have always come out more strongly task-oriented than people-oriented. This is no surprise to me. I really do love visioning, strategizing, organising, motivating and achieving. It's not that I don't care about people, but it's easy for me to put completing tasks ahead of building relationships.

I wish I was more people oriented, but that is not the way that God has made me. However, I don't see my task orientation as an excuse to avoid LOVE. I continue to try to serve those God has put within my influence. I want them to know that I really do care about them and that they are important to me. Maybe expressing LOVE doesn't come quite as naturally or easily to me as to some other leaders, but it still deeply impacts my leadership "Operating System." It's a key passion for me.

**Whether we succeed or fail, whether we obey or sin,  
whether we do well or badly, God will keep on loving us.**

As a young pastor, I moved from large church youth ministry to pastor a relatively new, smaller church. The smaller church had undergone significant pain as their first full-time pastor had abused and split the church, and so many were nervous about taking on a pastor who had only led youth. There was suspicion and fear about what a young pastor might do to this vulnerable, conservative congregation. God had given me lots of dreams for the church (which were fulfilled in time), but I knew that LOVE must come first. My new fearful family needed to know that I genuinely cared for them whatever happened. So for 12 months I served by visiting every family, listening to their stories and expressing my love and concern. As a result of LOVE, a new security and significance was born in the church which eventually resulted in exciting change and growth together.

Not that I've always got it right. As a busy senior pastor, I would work in my office all day, talking to staff when I needed to consult with them on issues. I cared about my team and they mostly appreciated and respected me, but I realised that there was no space to show how I was interested in the whole of their lives. So now I make sure that I'm in the staff room at most break times, enjoying the stories and relating as a friend. I also take time weekly to chat with each staff member about their life as well as their ministry.

I am excited when I listen to significant Christian leaders talk about their latest programs and ideas. But I no longer get carried away. I look deeper because I know what God says. **If influence is not driven by LOVE, then it's just a lot of empty noise that achieves absolutely nothing of significance in God's kingdom** (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Some of you do LOVE far better than I do. Praise God. As we grow in LOVE, Jesus will use us to build security and significance in those who follow us.

## JOURNAL ACTIVITY 2.5

### Checkpoint 2: LOVE

TOTAL:

Please rate each statement on the following scale:

- 5 - Strongly Agree;
- 4 - Agree;
- 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree;
- 2 - Disagree;
- 1 - Strongly Disagree

TOTAL the scores for each quality and put the total in the box. This gives a score out of 25. A score below 20 indicates significant room for growth.

- 1. I can honestly say that I love the people I am seeking to influence.**
- 2. I really want to serve and help people; that's one of the main reasons I do what I do.**
- 3. Those who I influence know that I am concerned about them and have time for them.**
- 4. I pray regularly and persistently for the people I am serving.**
- 5. People do see me as a servant. This is one of my prominent attributes.**

Describe briefly what you have learned about love as an essential in Christian leadership. Reflect on your self-assessment (above) and discuss the steps you are taking (or will take) to grow the way you show love to those you are leading.

## Discussion Questions: LOVE

*Choose the most appropriate questions.*

- 1.** What issues have the readings and journaling raised for you? Share your thoughts and questions.
- 2.** Share your response to Journal Activity 2.5.
- 3.** Describe someone of influence in your life who you feel has loved you. How did they show this?  
How did you know?
- 4.** What are some practical ways leaders you know show (or don't show) a servant attitude towards those they lead?
- 5.** Is it okay to invest more servant time into some people than others? On what basis?
- 6.** How do you decide who should take a significant amount of your time and effort? Who are you particularly investing in? Why?
- 7.** How can you tell when someone is being a 'doormat' rather than a servant leader? What boundaries have you placed on your serving?
- 8.** In a busy world with many demands, how can you tell when you've served people enough?
- 9.** What are you planning to do about LOVE in the next week?

## Case Studies: LOVE

*Choose the most relevant case studies to discuss.*

- 1.** Rachel has great visions and ideas and is very capable. She has achieved some significant successes. But she keeps getting members of the team she leads offside. They come to you (Rachel's friend and co-mentor) with criticisms like:
  - a.** "Rachel asks for my opinion and then just does what she wants anyway."
  - b.** "I never seem to be able to please Rachel. Whatever I do, she points out weaknesses."
  - c.** "Everything has to revolve around Rachel and her dreams."

Would you listen to their whinges? How would you respond to them? What could be Rachel's problem? In the light of this study what questions would you want to ask Rachel?

- 2.** Jake has decided to take on board these ideas on loving the people he is seeking to influence. He has been getting together a small group of mates to pray for 30 minutes each week. He is very busy and doesn't really have much to do with them outside this time. How could he show these guys that he really cares for them? Do you think this would make a difference to his influence with them?
- 3.** Brad really loves the people in his team. He has taken each of them out to dinner and constantly affirms the value of their contribution both privately and publicly. He takes his servant leadership role very seriously. The trouble is that the men's ministry his team is responsible for is not going well. The team members are actually pretty slack and events are not well promoted or organised, despite all Brad's efforts. Is Brad a good servant leader? Why or why not? If you were Brad, what would you do?
- 4.** Jenny is 23 and is a new Christian who has no church background. She has a leadership role in her work in the banking sector and is moving quickly up the corporate ladder. She is known as a go-getter. She has obvious leadership skills and she talks to you, her friend, about taking on a leadership role in the church. How might her leadership at work and her leadership in the church be different? What would you say to her about Christian influence? Would you encourage her to take on church leadership?
- 5.** Dan, a chaplain, relates well with the students, but finds that many of the teachers seem suspicious of him and keep him at arm's length. He wants to show that he cares about the teachers as much as the students, but is not sure how to do this without appearing desperate for their acceptance. What could Dan do?