

The Servant as Leader

By Terri Stovall

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Philippians 1:27-30 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What does Paul tell the church in Philippi to do in the midst of the opposition they are facing? Do Christians face opposition today? How can this be overwhelming, and can we do the same things Paul told the church at Philippi?

Assignment Two

Read Galatians 5:22. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How does the fruit of the spirit mirror the characteristics given in Philippians 2:1-4?

Assignment Three

Read Luke 14:11; 18:14; James 4:10; and 1 Peter 5:6. Compare these verses to Philippians 2:8-9. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What paradox, or unexpected benefit, comes from being humble?

Scripture to Memorize

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:5

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will know and understand what it means to lead as a servant.

Terri Stovall is dean of Women's Programs and assistant professor of Women's Ministry at Southwestern Seminary. She has earned two master's degrees and a doctorate from Southwestern. As the dean of Women's Programs, Terri oversees the academic programs for women as well as the various women's organizations on campus. She has served in Southern Baptist churches as women's minister and minister of education.

She is the coauthor of *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church* and a contributing author of *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* and *The Christian Homemaker's Handbook*. Her passion is to equip and enable women to reach women and families for Christ. She and her husband Jay currently live in Arlington, Texas, and enjoy motorcycling as well as traveling the country riding roller coasters.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

If you were running for president, what characteristics or slogans would be on your campaign signs? If Jesus were running for president, what do you think would be on His campaign signs?

The Servant as Leader

We have discovered who a disciple is, what a disciple does and how God leads His disciples. In this fourth week of study on servant leadership, let's put all of this together to see how disciples are to lead as servant leaders.

God has called disciples to lead, but not just to lead in the way the world thinks; always climbing the ladder of success. We are to lead like Jesus. What does that look like for you as you live in the twenty-first century?

Read Philippians 1:27-30 and 2:1-11 out loud.

Studying the Passage, Philippians 1:27-28

Verse 28. Not frightened in anything by your opponents. Paul wrote the book of Philippians to the church at Philippi. The church was facing some opposition and persecution similar to what Paul had experienced himself. They were struggling and becoming discouraged. They turned to Paul to ask, "What do we do?" In chapter 1, Paul told them they would face the enemy, but he also told them to be confident, to be courageous and to continue to "let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27).

Paul realized they were a little overwhelmed with the task at hand and the opposition they were facing. They seemed unsure of their ability to fulfill what they had been called to do. So Paul took a portion of his letter to remind them what believers have and who they are.

Assignment One

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share answers to these questions: What does Paul tell the church in Philippi to do in the midst of the opposition they are facing? Do Christians face opposition today? How can this be overwhelming, and can we do the same things Paul told the church at Philippi?

Discussion Questions

Has God ever called you to do something that seemed too big, too hard or too impossible for you to do? What was that and how did you respond?

Studying the Passage, Philippians 2:1-4

Verse 1. encouragement . . . love . . . fellowship . . . affection and sympathy. Paul began by reminding believers of what they already have in Christ. The repeated use of the word *if* in verse 1 does not mean "maybe" in the original language. Instead, it means a sure thing. This would be like saying, "If there is any encouragement in Christ – and there is." Jesus has called His disciples to do God-sized things, but He provides all that will enable those disciples to fulfill the task He has assigned. To be a servant leader, remember what you have.

Verse 2. same mind. God has called disciples to unity. Look around this study group. You all have surrendered your lives to Christ and He calls you to stand together, shoulder to shoulder.

We are to be of one mind in four ways, found in verses 2, 3 and 4.

1. **same love**—Servant leaders exhibit a love for God and a love for others.
2. **full accord**—Servant leaders are to stand together and work together in unity. Disciples are to stand fast, with one mind, to stare into the face of the enemy, being united for the purpose of sharing God's love with others.
3. **Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit**—A servant leader puts others' needs above his own.
4. **the interests of others**—Servant leaders are to look out for both their own interests and the interests of others.

Assignment Two

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now describe the similarities between Galatians 5:22 and Philippians 2:1-4.

Discussion Question

As a group, read 1 Corinthians 13 out loud. Every time you see "I" read it as "I, a servant leader." After reading the passage together, share any new insights into what makes up a servant leader.

Studying the Passage

Verses 5-11 form a hymn describing the nature of Christ. Paul gave us the ultimate illustration of the humility and selflessness he was trying to describe in the previous verses. He used the example of Christ, the ultimate servant leader.

Verse 5. Have this mind among yourselves. Verse 10. so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Two bookends for this passage tell us what to do and why to do it. In verse 5 we are told to have the same attitude as Christ, the first bookend. Then, in verse 10 we find for what purpose, the second bookend—that the name of Jesus will be acknowledged and that He will be confessed as Lord. What an amazing task we have been given! We are called to be servant leaders who lead others to Jesus!

Verse 7. emptied Himself. Jesus led by being a servant. Jesus was equal to God the Father because He was and is God. He didn't get rid of that part of Himself, but took on or added to Himself the form of a bondservant.

Verse 8. humbled Himself. Jesus led by humbling Himself. Jesus' humility required Him to submit to the will of God and to be obedient. He did whatever it took to fulfill the Father's plan, even when it meant His death.

Assignment Three

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week should read aloud the assigned verses. Compare these verses to Philippians 2:8-9. Then share an answer to the following question: What is the paradox, or unexpected benefit, that comes from being humble?

Studying the Passage

Verse 10–11. Every knee should bow . . . every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

A day will come when we will all kneel. We cannot duplicate the precise ministry of Jesus, nor do we need to. The work has been done and the battle has been won. Today we humble ourselves before the Lord. We recognize our desperate need for God's help and we submit to His will. When Christ returns, He graciously will allow us to share in His exaltation. Right now, many have not encountered Christ and the cross. We must move quickly if they are going to

share in the great family reunion before the throne.

On Your Own

Whom do you know who needs to know Christ? Write their names. Beside each name, write one thing you can do this week to lead them to take steps toward Christ. When everyone in the group is finished, share at least one name and one step you will take.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

God has called disciples to lead others to Him and disciple and equip those who know Jesus. Everything we do in life goes back to this calling. He commands disciples to lead with the “mind . . . which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5) so that one day “every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (v.11). We are called to be servant leaders, leading people to Christ.

Paul’s instructions to the church at Philippi help us know what it means to stand firm as disciples, leading others to the cross. We must remember what we already have for that task! We have “encouragement in Christ . . . comfort from love . . . participation in the Spirit . . . affection and sympathy” (Philippians 2:1).

As we walk daily as disciples leading others to Him, we will face opposition. Therefore, God calls us to lead with one mind, having the same love, being united, not being selfish but looking to others’ interests (Philippians 2:2-4).

Paul emphasized the way a servant leads by using Jesus as an example. Jesus “emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:7). Even though Jesus was fully God, He knew that in order to reconcile God and man He had to step down from His throne in heaven, to be like man. He came not just to take on the likeness of man, but to serve man.

Jesus also “humbled Himself by becoming obedient” (Philippians 2:8). Jesus could have demanded His own way; He is God after all. Instead, He chose to set that aside and be obedient to the Father’s plan – even to the point of death.

During this study you were asked to write down the name of someone you know who needs to know Jesus.

1. What have you done this week to lead that person to take steps toward the cross?
2. Are you willing to say, “Father, whatever it takes, even unto death” so that person will know Jesus is Lord?

Follow up Questions

What characteristic of a servant leader comes easily for you? What characteristic of a servant leader is a struggle?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.