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## Leadership by the Book: Tools to Transform your Workplace – A Book Review

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Since Robert K. Greenleaf pioneered the paradigm of servant-leadership and forwarded an explanation of this phenomenon (Greenleaf, 1977, 1982); his leadership style has blossomed into the mainstream-leadership discourse and lauded by many scholars as an alternative leadership-paradigm of significance in human relations. The book, *Leadership by the Book*, by Blanchard, Hybels and Hodges (1999) is among many that lend itself to expounding on and utilizing the servant-leadership-paradigm in contemporary society, including the running of organizations. *Leadership by the Book* constitutes of 217 pages, 21 chapters, and two epilogues; and provides a holistic evaluation of servant-leadership from a case study perspective, using narratives, theoretical framework, and illustrations. The chapters are succinct, simply written – low readability – large font size, biblical references, and historical illustrations that are all geared toward imparting the concepts to the readers. Hence, the book is a compass to effective leadership by modeling the philosophies, behaviour, beliefs and attitudes of Jesus of Nazareth, the true exemplar of servant-leader. Unlike other books in the area of leadership, this one employs a case study approach by way of narratives to forward the issue of servanthood and characteristics of the servant leader.

Greenleaf (1977, 1982, 1991, 1996, and 1998) conceptualizes the servant as a leader or the teacher as a servant, servanthood; it was against the mainstream paradigm in leadership philosophies. Greenleaf was developing nothing new; he was juxtaposing the life and practices of Jesus of Nazareth on contemporary human relations. Prior to Greenleaf, no one had examined the life and practices of Jesus of Nazareth and how his style of leadership was old but revolutionary and offered itself to a

totally different paradigm, which still has important tenets to add to the leadership perspectives. This leadership paradigm, servant leadership, has no ego, character is everything and that your behaviour must be based on your character and not personality. One of the authors of this book is a trained minister whom would have been introduced to this style of leadership as it is critical to his profession. Hence, having recognized the value of servant leadership, they seek to unravel this paradigm in mainstream thinking, particularly organizational behaviour, by way of providing readers with these principles, perspectives and practices using a story of three associates. The book epitomizes intrigue, drama, suspense, lessons, instructions, and practices, within the context of the narratives, and the presentation is worthy or relevance of readership because of it has practicality to effective leadership using a workable paradigm based on Jesus' behaviour, practices and lifestyle. So, may I have your attention for a few minutes to provide a review of the book, *Leadership by the Book*?

Blanchard et al. write:

People today seeking practical advice on effective leadership rarely gives serious consideration to Jesus [of Nazareth]. This is true of people with different religious beliefs as well as many who call themselves followers of Jesus. For whatever reason, Jesus is not regarded as a relevant model and teacher of how to inspire, direct, and equip people to produce good results (p. xi)

Like Greenleaf who brings forwarded the Jesus' practices, behaviour, lifestyle and perspective on the effective way of human behaviour and coins the term servant-leadership to explain what transpired then and argue that it has importance

to current human relations, Blanchard et al.'s belief is no different and it is encapsulated in the introduction of their book as expressed in aforementioned quotation. Leadership by the Book can be expressed another way, leadership by the Bible, with the life and practices of Jesus of Nazareth, the New Testament, being the focal point of text. It is the realization that has led to the development and writing of Leadership by the Book as the author believe that Jesus' approach to human relations is like none other, an effective paradigm, long-lasting and is an applicable perspective even outside of Christianity (Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. xii-xiv). The authors contend that servant-leadership has displayed by Jesus of Nazareth transformed cultural history and that is was done "By presenting this message of unified moral character, sound method, and consistent behaviour..." (p. xiii). Hence, Blanchard, et al. illustrate servant leadership by way of a case study, using narratives.

Leadership by the Book draw your mental attention, ignite all your senses, intellect, provide intrigue, stir one's emotions and provide a deep message like the movies around three friends, and how they develop a new social bonding following a heart attack of one of the friends, Michael. The three friends are Michael, business executive; Professor, lecture in leadership, and a Pastor, and to a lesser extent the wives of these men. A part of the story is the trajectory of the men's spiritual experiences and how the heart attack of Michael provides a classic case upon which the paradigm of servant leadership evolves and became the central theme of the book. The three men met in different social settings, developed a bond, and owing to their placement jobs, this created separation; but their initial ties was not completely severed so when a crisis arose, the men were able to rekindle the bond and coalesce around a friend who needed assistance.

Michael, the victim of the heart attack, according to Carla, his wife, says "He kept talking about the need to rekindle his servant heart and bemoaned the fact that he'd stopped looking at Jesus as his model for effective leadership. He admitted that once his heart had hardened at work, it affect his relationship at home" (in Blanchard, et al, 1999, p. 35), which is a call made to the Professor. It is a call by Michael's wife, Carla, to his friend, the Professor, for help a day before Michael's heart attack. While some distance had come between the male-friends, the Professor's wife, Allison, and Carla had remained close and so the call was made by her as she thought both Michael

and the Professor should rekindle their closeness. This is the story which is the nexus of the leadership by the Book, the Bible, and it begins in the waiting room at the hospital while Michael was in the intensive care unit (pp. 35-37).

Carla had not lost her religious faith, but Michael had drifted far away from his religious perspective. Carla initiated the trajectory to the issue of servant-leadership, which blossomed from in the intensive care. She initiated the process, this way "If the Lord is willing to restore Michael's health and give him another chance", she said, "he's going to need your help in facing the future (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 36). The three were now at the same place, with one being ill and the others were called upon to provide service to a friend. The case history of Michael's condition provides the theme for the book, servant leadership. The two friends, the Pastor and Professor, sit in the waiting room at the hospital for an entire night, introspection and reflection on what when wrong, how they missed what was going on, where things went wrong for Michael and that the fact that they may have left him at his vulnerable point, which led to this situation.

Blanchard et al. (1999) document in Chapter 6, Effective Leadership Starts on the Inside, Michael's inner recognition and call for renewal in his spiritual journey. "From my discussion with him I sensed that Michael had lost track of the internal heart aspect of leadership and becoming increasingly frustrated with what was happening to his life" said the Minister (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 39). The authors structure the internal renewal of Michael as the beginning of call to servant leadership and that his chart a path for discussion on the servant leadership paradigm (pp. 39-46). The issue of servant leadership commences with a discussion between the Minister and the Professor in the waiting area, which predates Michael's involvement. The essence of servant leadership is internal change and not outward transformation, and this is the hallmark for successful or effective leadership, leading from inside-outward. The issue of internal transformation deals with character development such as honesty, truth, love, forgiveness is not long lasting and these provide transformation in thinking, from which behaviour is expressed. From the character perspective, the authors introduce the dilemma in leadership between the disparities in behaviours of some leaders such as political whose behaviour is driven by motives and evolving from a character vantage point (p. 41).

They fail to lead by example as there is a separation of motives from heart (pp. 45-46) as they are driven from motives, ego and personality (p. 40).

To expand a wider discussion of character ethic, the authors use a perspective from the Professor, “So you might say Jesus does not want us just to act honestly because it’s the thing to do; he want us to be honest people at the core of our being. Then honesty will be our automatic response in everything we do” (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 41). The narrative by the Professor goes to the heart of character ethic of people and that character must not be a fluid behaviour, it must be a paradigm after which behaviour will emerge in keeping with thinking. The conversation between the Professor and the Minister continues as the latter was teaching the Professor on effective leadership from the perspective of Jesus’ servant-leadership paradigm. The Professor was been schooled on the servant leadership paradigm from a layman in leadership. The Minister contends that there are two types of leaders: 1) people who lead first and 2) people who service-other first (p. 42). He says:

People who are leaders first are too often those who naturally try to control, to make decisions, to give orders. They’re driven to lead-they want to be in charge. And they’re possessive about their leadership position – they think they own it...Leaders who are servant first will assume leadership only if they see it as the best way they can serve. They’re ‘called’ to lead, rather than driven, because they naturally want to be helpful. They aren’t possessive about their leadership position- they view it as an act of stewardship rather than ownership (p. 42)

The issue of status-role becomes a power-ball in the hands of those who lead first as against those who service-others first who are not deceived by their privileged status. Those in the latter group are moved by a need to serve other, servants and not leaders. The Minister forwards a scripture that was used by Jesus of Nazareth to seek of servant-leadership, which is “...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave to all” (in Blanchard, et al., 2016, p. 44). Power or greatness according to Jesus was in servitude and not status-position. So, the Professor remarks, “Tell me more” (p. 43). The Minister responds to the query in this manner, “To get something, you have to go to the right

source “(p. 42). He continues, “And there’s no better source than Jesus [of Nazareth]” (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 43). The Minister makes the Professor aware that Jesus of Nazareth is the exemplar for servant-leadership and that ‘getting it’ is given to as many as who desire it. To concretizes this perspective of servant-leadership, the Minister uses an exchange between Jesus and his disciples, which goes like this “He first pointed out the overbearing way that ungodly rulers in this world exercised authority over others...Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servants, and whoever want to be first must be slave to all...He showed us that true leadership starts on the inside with servant heart, then moves outwards to serve others” (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 44).

Clearly, the Professor who was being schooled in servant leadership is receptive to the new information, which is captured in this expression of his “So what you’re saying is that character in the form of a servant heart precedes the use of effective leadership method” (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 45). He was been introduced to a totally different aspect to leadership by way of the life, teachings, practices, and thinking of Jesus of Nazareth. It is simply, ‘walking their talking’ which the Professor exclaims that is widely not the case among many contemporary leaders (p. 46). The Professor notes that confusion today is the unethical and character-disparity differential that is exhibited by many of the contemporary leaders. Their character-disparity differential is captured in famous saying, ‘Do what I say and not as I do’, which is contradictory to the belief, teaching and practices of Jesus of Nazareth. His accusers could not find any faults in Him as his behaviour was aligned with his teachings, leading by example (p. 48).

The Professor believes that in retrospect, his philosophies on leadership or management was built around personally ethic –focusing on exhibited behaviour of the leader or leader-manager and not his/her character (in Blanchard et al., 1999, p. 48). The Professor laments that this is the theory and paradigm he has been employing as it predates his teaching in leadership, to which he was schooled at the graduate level. In comparison, he opines that the closer leadership perspective that comes to this new paradigm, servant leadership, is ‘team’ or ‘participative-supportive’ style leadership. He contends that the perceived best-practice according to management-paradigm can be good as well as catastrophic. The Professor outlines the catastrophic aspect to team leadership based

on a discussion he had with class on day during a lecture, which is, “What would happen if you were the teacher here, and this classroom burst into flames. Would you ask everyone to break into small groups to discuss the best way out of the room, then have each group choose a spokesperson to make a report so that the whole group could come to consensus on the best course of action? (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 48). The Professor highlights a fundamental flaw of ‘team’ or participative-style leader and that this approach is not a best practice compared to the servanthood. He believes that the while tradition leadership styles have been promulgated and widely used by many organizations and scholars, they have been found wanting as people are still seeking an alternative paradigm. However, servant leadership is most effective and long lasting a leadership style as look at the number of followers or constituents that Jesus of Nazareth has today (pp. 52-54).

The story is simultaneous teaching between the Minister and the Professor, with there been different exchange and the passing of knowledge. The Minister was also been schooled by the leadership-guru. He [the Professor] remarks, “Your writings convinced me that for someone to be an effective servant leader, that person must be able to utilize a servant-leader approach in three domains: intellectual, emotion, and behavioral” (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 53). It was a balanced and healthy exchange of ideas between the two friends in the waiting room at the hospital, while they await Michael recovery from the coma following the heart attack. The Minister was learning that having a servant-heart was not only a prerequisite for effective leadership as there needs to be aligned with skills, belief and practices (pp. 54-55). Simply put, there is a need for synergy among the elements of leadership, character and leadership styles or methods, in order for there to be functional leadership and the exemplified in Jesus of Nazareth (pp. 56-63).

One of the hallmarks of servant-leadership is expressed by the Professor, “It didn’t take long before we all were learners” (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, 62) as in the servant leadership paradigm, role and status are rotated among the members, and each individual is both a leader and a follower/constituents. This paradigm, while is not new, was been rediscovered by the three friend and it is solely because of a heart attack that happened to Michael. Servant leadership is both exciting and a confidence builder for each person, while accountability is at the core of such a paradigm. (p. 63).

Accountability comes by way of having people’s interest at heart, empowering them; sharing power, listening to them, satisfying growth and developing other, and having others assess your contribution to their development (pp. 66-67). The Minister offers a perspective that is NOT about pleasing everyone but it is allowing people to be empowered in finding their goals and be effective while ultimately pleasing God (pp. 68-71). It is not just about personal expectations as it is about meeting the requirements and expectations of God having performed his value-orientation.

Michael had recovered having successful undergone a by-passed surgery (pp. 90-92). Carla had solicited the assistance of Michael’s his associates to in awakening his heart, providing spiritual guidance and being a tower of strength during his release from hospital. The men played a retreat with their wives, as it would be a soul renewal and one that would bond them socially and psychologically, which is from which the servant leadership discourse become more intense, widens and strength among the friend. The reality is the paradigm of the servant leadership blossoms and took on a new dimension at the retreat (pp. 93-100). With no contact to the outside work but by way of an ancient telephone, no luxuries including mobile phones, iPod or laptops, the friends bonded unlike no time before and they had time to extensively examined the issues of life, challenges, weaknesses, strengthens, shortfalls, pitfalls and the way forward. It was during the retreat that the Minister handed Michael a napkin that had 12 steps for faith-walk leadership or servant leadership (pp. 101-108). Those steps are as follows:

- Servant leadership is by way of Jesus of Nazareth’s model and that ego should not get in the way;
- Motives, thoughts and actions can be transformed by God in keeping with a Jesus model;
- Decisions are turn over to God and be an apprentice of Jesus;
- Aligning motives, thoughts and behaviour in line with servant leadership;
- Openly know one’s leadership gap;
- Remove character weaknesses, deficiencies or defects;
- Remove shortcomings and strengthen the person against temptations, power, greed and recognition;

- Listing people whom I have harmed by my ego-drive leadership, and be willing to make amends to them all;
- Make direct amends to such people whenever possible, unless doing so would injure them or others;
- Do a self inventory regarding one's leadership role, and when wrong, admit it;
- Engaged in discipline of solitude, prayer, and study of the Scriptures, align servant leadership behaviour efforts with what Jesus modeled – servant first and leader second;
- Practice all the principles of servant leadership.

Faith walk leadership or servant leadership is not about a religious transformation to Christianity; it is simply a lifestyle by using Jesus' model as guide to contemporary leadership practices (p. 106). The essence of this programme is servant-based leadership that values itself by way of Jesus 'model – Jesus-like leadership (pp. 106-107). Hence, it surrounds character development which is expressed and practiced by Jesus and not concerned about personality or self-image. In framing character development, as is based on Jesus' model, the Minister expresses some challenges in ego-filled hearts of humans. He contends that it:

- Separates the person from God, from each other and from ourselves;
- Is always about compassion – it rarely satisfied or find comfort in what it has, and
- Is deceptive – it builds arrogance, complacency, and fear (in Blanchard, et al., 116)

All three friends concur that the character of an individual must be solidly built in order to withstand against the realities of this world – ego, pride and self-image (p. 118). It should not be about leadership at all cost. However, it cannot be solely character as it is an organic system like a biological system, where each is functioning as a result of the collective whole – character and leadership methods (p. 119). The construct of the methods of leadership are primarily a subset of a person with a servant heart. These methods of leadership are:

1. A vision – purpose, values, image and goals (pp. 120-129);
2. Implementation – responsible and responsive (pp. 130-145), and

3. Performance (i.e. performance coaching aspect of leadership) – planning, day-to-day coaching and evaluation (pp. 146-157).

The Minister adds that this is made easier by way of a compass and a navigation system, Jesus' model (pp. 158-164). Jesus of Nazareth has a vision, a clear purpose, values and goals that he had to meet. With his vision, he recruited people, taught them, showed them how to live, argue that they should resist the temptation of being like the current leaders, serve in order to be great, respond to others and have them respond to you. He was not only a teacher, rabbi; Jesus was able to continuously coach his disciples on a day-to-day basis. He evaluated their performance, offered corrections, re-evaluate, noted errors and used positive reinforcement to encourage a repeat of behaviour. Jesus admonishes his disciples that they are unable to attain the required servant leadership with the direct assistance from on high and this is why prayer, solitude and supplications are needed to connect the individual to the source. Hence, even in the evident of failure, the individual must hold steadfast or accept God unconditional love for us and that this reassurance will ignite the courage to make the necessary amendments and continue on the trajectory (p. 159). Secondly, the issue of trust is important as it relates to commitment and follow-through. Reassure yourself in the promises of God and dedicate yourself to fulfilling his will (in Blanchard, et al., 1999, p. 160), which is why solitude, scripture-reading and prayer are critical components to guide this servant-heart (pp. 161-166).

In concluding, the book is a refreshing compass to empowering servant leadership orientation in everyone. While is it substantially based from a Christian perspective, many of the issues are relevant outside of Christendom and should not be lost because of one's religious or not ideashanal. The material is well written the story like narrative provides for insights and it was a good teaching aid approach. It is an excellent book for English language, literature from beyond the 3rd form into freshman year. Leadership by the Book is encapsulated within the following areas:

- Servant leadership is not synonymous with pleasing everyone as this was not case displayed by Jesus of Nazareth;
- Servant-heart leaders are guided by a spiritual compass than an earthly perspective – which is event from most of the historical great leaders;

- Effective servant leadership is about empowerment, and development of the leadership potential in others, and
- Servanthood is about commitment to serving others first.

Undoubtedly the book should be entitled 'Leading at a Higher Level: By Jesus' Model of Servant Leadership' as this was the essence of the text. Servanthood, service-centered leadership or Jesus' Model of Servant Leadership is based on humility, followership, servant first, character development, shared responsibility and authority, serving a vision and not a position or status, and responsibility to other, while fulfilling God's will for your life. Jesus of Nazareth displays servant leadership when he washed the feet of his disciples and subjects himself to the will of GOD and not of self, servant to a mission and not to status-position. Hence, the book is about character-based leadership which is totally different from the conventional personality-based leadership. It

is leadership based on the principles of Servanthood or Jesus' principles of leadership.

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