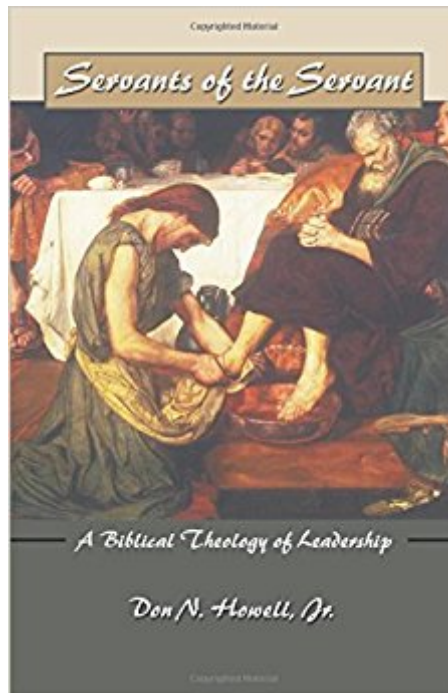


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# Servants Of The Servant: A Biblical Theology Of Leadership



## Synopsis

Leadership is a subject that has gained impressive visibility in the past two decades. The number of books, monographs and articles, as well as seminars, devoted to the development of one's leadership skills has been almost exponential growth. This study is an attempt to forge a full-orbed theology of Christian leadership grounded in the teaching of Scripture. What emerges from tracing the theme of leadership through the biblical record is a servanthood pattern, one that is wholly distinct from prevailing secular models. Our exposition begins with the biblical language of the servant, the term of choice for those great leaders used of God to further his saving purposes in the world. Eleven Old Testament and five New Testament leaders are profiled. The portrait of Jesus Christ focuses on three motifs that governed his training of the twelve for kingdom ministry. The Pauline letters are mined for those convictions that governed Paul's practice of leadership, both of his mission team and of the faith communities that emerged from that mission. The treatment of each leader, from Joseph to Paul, begins with a series of preliminary questions and concludes with a mini-profile that correlates the biblical data with these questions. The final chapter offers a summary profile of the servant leader, one whose character, motives and agenda align with the divine purposes. Though designed as a textbook for upper level college and seminary courses on leadership, the book's readable format is ideal for churches and parachurch organizations in their leadership training programs. The author's prayer is that this work will serve as a catalyst to call God's people back to Scripture and thereby raise up a whole new generation of authentic servant-leaders.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Don N. Howell Jr. has taught New Testament in the Seminary and School of Missions of Columbia International University in Columbia, South Carolina since 1995. Before that, Don and his wife, Melissa, served fifteen years with OMF International in church planting and theological education in Japan. Howell's earlier book, *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Wipf & Stock, 2003) traces the theme of servant leadership through the biblical record. Dr. Howell has taught in many cross-cultural settings, including East Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, China, and Micronesia.

The purpose of the book, according to the author, is to identify the traits, examples, and characteristics of leadership found in the Bible and then construct a profile of what kind of leadership "effectively promotes the kingdom of God in the world and meets with God's approval" (1). Howell contends that servant leadership is the biblical example of those God chooses for leadership in His kingdom. Leadership is defined as initiative and influence: the leader sees a need and addresses the need based on his or her governing principles. The leader uses influence to compel others to join in the cause and accomplish the objective of meeting the need (1). Whether or not a person's leadership is constructive and healthy depends on the leader's character, motives, and agenda. Howell contends these three things are at the heart of true biblical servant-leadership, and are the characteristics God considers when choosing a leader (2). He defines biblical leadership as "taking the initiative to influence people to grow in holiness and to passionately promote the extension of God's kingdom in the world" (3). Howell gives a good overview of the Old and New Testament terms for "servant" and "slave," drawing conclusions from how these terms are used and defined. The writers of the Old Testament take a term for oppression, "slave," and use it as a title of honor and dignity: servant of the Lord (10). The New Testament writers follow the same pattern by transforming the terms for "servant" and "slave" from secular understandings associated with humiliation and oppression into terms of great spiritual significance because of the example of Christ. An important section of *Servants of the Servant* describes Jesus' teaching on leadership as related to the kingdom of God. Howell explains three central lessons Jesus used and reinforced regularly to equip the disciples as kingdom stewards. First, Jesus passed on a theology of the kingdom of God, explaining how it has an already/not yet quality to it, allowing kingdom stewards to have clarity of mission and direction, to recognize the dynamics of kingdom growth, and to endure

hardship because the end is certain. Secondly, Jesus taught that freedom in the new covenant is not the right to do as one pleases, but rather the Spirit-energized ability to live a life that pleases God because it reflects His character. Finally, Jesus taught that greatness in God's kingdom consists in imitating the Son of God who came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life for others. After detailing the biblical record and leadership profiles of many Old Testament and New Testament leaders, Howell concludes his book by providing the promised profile of biblical leadership. In his profile of a servant-leader, Howell again emphasizes three things: the proven character of the leader, or who a leader is and is becoming; the motive of the leader, which is to have a desire for God's glory and the spiritual welfare of God's people; and the agenda of the leader, which is nothing less than the mission of God to reconcile sinners to Himself through the blood of Jesus Christ. *Servants of the Servant* claims to be a biblical theology of leadership, and it is. Howell is able to help his readers grasp the transformation in the biblical understanding of terms such as "slave" and "servant" from demeaning terms of oppression and humiliation to titles of honor with deep theological significance drawn from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. There is evidence of extensive research with some thought given to application as well. Because of the technical nature of the language study the book would be an appropriate text for a seminary-level course in ministerial leadership. Each chapter is dedicated to the study of an Old or New Testament leader, and the chapters conclude with profiles of each leader. These summary thoughts contain excellent insight into the biblical leader's experience as a leader. Howell applies these insights to current leadership realities. The profiles are so full of implication and meaning that they should have been the focus of the entire chapter and not summary statements at the end. This is the greatest weakness of the book. The bulk of each chapter is dedicated to recounting the biblical record, but the meat for leadership studies is found primarily in the smaller summary sections. *Servants of the Servant* does manage to distinguish itself from other works on biblical servant-leadership. Efrain Agosto approaches the subject from the perspective of action - what the servant-leader does, such as engage in social justice and empower followers (Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus and Paul*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005). C. Gene Wilkes unpacks the idea of serving by highlighting the recipient or recipients of the service by saying the servant-leader serves the mission given by God and serves those on mission with the servant-leader (C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1998). Howell brings out that leaders are servant-leaders because of who they are - a servant-leader's action is the result of an inward reality. A leader's character, motives, and agenda are all defined and transformed by Christ, and these inward realities define how a servant-leader leads. Howell

describes two New Testament terms and their usage: *doulos* or slave is one who has offered his or her "entire life to promote the welfare of one's Lord" (14), and *diakonos* or servant is one who, in humility and love, "expresses that surrender by pursuing the welfare of one's fellow servants" (14). These correspond to Wilkes' idea of serving the mission given by God and serving those on mission with the leader. Wilkes has a stronger emphasis on followership in his explanation of servant-leadership than Howell or Agosto. Howell assumes followership in the servant-leader's transformed character, motives, and agenda, but Wilkes does a better job of emphasizing the importance of keeping God as the leader and submitting to Christ in all things. Servants of the Servant makes good contributions to the study of biblical servant-leadership, especially in the area of understanding the transformed nature of the leader's interior life and motives. For this reason, it is an important addition to the library of students of biblical servant-leadership.

I bought this book for a retreat I was leading for my leadership team (I'm a campus minister) on servant leadership. At first, I was surprised by the academic tone of the book, but I grew to like it. The author gives some basics and background information and then delves into different Biblical Leaders and their particular styles later in the book, devoting a chapter to each. I think that this is the great gift this book offers: taking individual Biblical leaders in all their imperfection and analyzing each one. I think that this book is great for leading a retreat, discussion, or workshop, but can also be taken into prayer by those of us in Church leadership.

Great book written by a very insightful theologian with biblical insights on being a servant to the Servant.

Good Reading

I am completely satisfied and fast delivery a plus!

Excellent book. The best I've found on this topic

College text book. Had to buy it for class I'm taking. Grab your Bible and read John chapter 3. Great stuff.

Excited with my first read and wanted to give it as a gift to someone I knew would appreciate it. And

they did!!!

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