

Reflecting on *The Servant*

The book *The Servant* was assigned as part of a book club activity for NUR 614 Resilient Nursing Leadership. The following is a summary from the book club discussions on *The Servant*.

How I will incorporate this into my own practice?

1. Active listening is something I want to improve upon
2. Throughout earning my BSN and now through the courses I've taken as a grad student, I've become to better understand what it means to be a leader. I struggle with the management side of things, and this book actually helped me understand that about myself. It is because much of what I have seen from those who have been "in charge" of me have managed, not led. I have had some great leaders in my life too, but now, I can better understand, respect, and appreciate them. At the time, I didn't see how they were taking care of what I needed.

Does servant leadership work in all sectors?

The answer is yes. The author provided many great examples of how it can – such as in raising a family, running a business, and leading an army. As we learned throughout the reading, the basis of servant leadership is the golden rule (see next). This can be applied to every sector in life and business.

Servant leaders are for others and not for their own gain – true or false?

True. Examples from the book:

- Caring about a person and their development before one's own
- Leader has a vested sense in the success of those being led, one of the roles of being a leader is to make others successful (pg. 114)

- Meeting someone's needs before they even recognize their needs (pg. 79)

Further Discussion Topics

- Golden Rule
 - Servant leadership is based on the Golden Rule, treat people the way you want to be treated (pg xv)
 - Important to treat other human beings exactly the way you would want them to treat you
- Leadership is not management
 - Someone can be a great manager but an awful leader
 - Management is what you do
 - Management is not something you do to other people. Instead you manage your inventory, your checkbook, your resources, yourself. You, however, do not manage other human beings. You manage things. You lead people (pg. 28)
 - Leadership is the person you are and the influence and impact you have on people, it is synonymous with influence (pg. xvi)
 - Employees will spend about half their life living and working in an environment created by a leader (pg 27)
- Leadership is a skill
 - It is a learned or acquired ability (pg xvi), listening is one of the most important skills a leader can chose to develop
 - Developing leadership and character, based on foundation, feedback, friction

- Key to leadership is accomplishing the tasks at hand while building relationships (pg 41)
- What is a servant?
 - Identifying and meeting the legitimate needs of the people enlisted to your care
 - Meeting NEEDS not wants
 - Being their servant NOT SLAVE (pg xviii) - do not identify and meet the wants of people, as this is a slave. A servant does what others need (pg. 65)
 - Finding that “sweet spot” between hugging and spanking (pg. xxii)
 - Caring about a person and their development before one’s own - leader has a vested sense in the success of those being led, one of the roles of being a leader is to make others successful (pg. 114)
 - Meeting someone’s needs before they even recognize their needs (pg. 79)
- Power vs. authority (pg 30)
 - Power means to force, erodes relationships
 - Authority is the skill of getting people to willingly do your will because of your personal influence
 - Built on service and sacrifice – Law of the Harvest, reap what you sow, you serve me, I serve you, you go to the wall for me, I’ll go to the wall for you (pg. 85)
 - Intentions plus actions equals will – when our actions align with our intentions, we lead with authority (p 89)
 - Leading with authority means taking risks (pg 175)

- There is great joy in leading with authority, serving others by meeting their legitimate needs; loving, serving and extending ourselves for others forces us out of our self-centeredness (pg 182)
- Respect
 - Your feelings of respect must be aligned with your actions of respect (pg. 49)
- Change
 - It is impossible to improve unless we change (pg 54)
 - Everyone wants to change the world but no one wants to change himself (pg. 144)
 - Everything starts with a choice (pg 182) – intentions minus actions equals squat – and that is where a person begins, with making a choice
- Pyramid
 - Everyone has always looked upward toward the boss in an organization and away from the customer (pg 60)
 - Seagull manager
- Love
 - Love is patient, kind, humility, respectfulness, selflessness, forgiveness, honesty, commitment – similar to the list of leadership qualities (pg. 99)
 - Loving others pushes us forward out of our terrible twos and loving others forces us to grow up (pg. 182)
- Active listening
 - Attempting to see things as the speaker sees them and attempting to feel things as the speaker feels them (pg 105)

- Honesty
 - Quality most people put at the top of the list in what they want from a leader
 - Builds trust, which in turn holds relationships together (pg. 118)
 - Is the tough side of love and brings balance to love (pg. 119)
 - Is about clarifying expectations and holding others accountable
 - Giving bad news as well as good, feedback
 - Being consistent, predictable and fair
 - Free from deception and dedicated to truth (pg. 119)

- Praxis
 - Our thoughts and feelings drive our behavior; thoughts, feelings, beliefs, our paradigms, greatly influence our behavior
 - Praxis teaches us that the opposite is also true – that our behavior also influences our thoughts and our feelings eg. adoptive children, pets, cigarettes, gardening, booze, cars, etc. – we become attached (pg. 149)
 - Also works oppositely – dehumanizes the enemy, eg. war – makes it easier to justify killing the enemy, if we dislike someone and treat them badly, we will come to hate them even more
 - Fake it to make it - we are more likely to act ourselves into a feeling than feel ourselves into action (pg 150)
 - Example of marriage, failing, go back to the “romance”

- Man is self-determining
 - What is actualized in people *depends on decisions* but not on conditions
 - Two things in life one must do – die and make choices (pg 161)

- Discipline is teaching ourselves to do what is NOT normal – we do this until it becomes natural and habit (pg 163)
- Stages on pg 164
- Thoughts become actions, actions become habits, habits become our character, our character becomes our destiny (pg 167)
- Selective perception
 - We find the things we are looking for (Pg 171)
 - If we don't stand for something, we will fall for anything (pg 174)

An article we read for our leadership paper influence and power verses leadership and management, *Leadership and Management Skills in Healthcare*, touched on a lot of ideas about power and influence as The Servant did. Leadership was described in that article (Ellis and Abbott (2013) as how people behave and engage with others, and a good leader is one that others want to follow. This shows how the leader, while perhaps in power, is not leading that way but is instead leading by influence, getting others to follow by those persons wanting to follow. Leaders also need to be exceptional at facilitating and directing those they inspire but do so in a manner that is not viewed as being like a dictator or being on some sort of power trip (Ellis & Abbott, 2013). While leaders know what they want to achieve, they are also open to listening to others and accommodating based on the input from team members, which increases team morale, but allows the leader to maintain control too (Ellis & Abbott, 2013).

Ellis & Abbott also make the same argument as Hunter in that , not all managers are leaders (Ellis & Abbott, 2013). Managers can be leaders, but oftentimes make many missteps to achieving what it means to be an effective leader while keeping with the managerial roles. Most

managers “manage” as Hunter puts it, which is not what you do to people. You are to lead, not manage.

References

- Ellis, P. & Abbott, J. (2013). Leadership and management skills in health care. *British Journal of Cardiac Nursing*, 8(2), 96-99. Retrieved February 2, 2019 from <https://web-a-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.umary.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=36ea18e3-c887-4f72-b6f0-bb28c6303fa5%40sdc-v-sessmgr01>
- Hunter, J.C. (1998). *The servant: A simple story about the true essence of leadership*. New York: Crown Business.