

Rooted in Paradoxes

Lesson 3: Servant Leadership

Objectives:

Students will

- examine stereotypes of “leaders” and “servants”
- interact with a Biblical understanding of Servant Leadership
- look for ways to be “servant leaders” in their own lives

Materials Needed

- ☐ Four pieces of poster paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Lesson 3 handout “Servant Leadership” and a pen for groups of 2-4 students
- ☐ Bible or copy of the Bible passages for each group

Minds On

The goal of this first task is to help students explore their own preconceived ideas of what it means to be a leader, and compare and contrast them with their ideas of what it means to be a servant.

Divide the students into two groups. If possible, have the two groups gather in different rooms. It is ideal if each group is unaware of what the other is working on. Enlist the help of another adult leader or a responsible student to help facilitate one of the groups.

Group One:

- 1) On one piece of poster paper, have students brainstorm a list of “leaders.” These can be world leaders, members of the community, people in the church, friends...anyone that they consider to be a leader. (Create a list of 10-12)
- 2) With this task complete, ask them to look at all of those names and come up with a list of characteristics, qualities, or personality types that are exemplified by these leaders. These items can either be positive or negative. Use the second piece of poster paper to record this list of character traits they noticed.
- 3) Finally, based on the characteristics that they have compiled, have the students develop a working definition of what it means to be a leader. Record the definition on the bottom of the second piece of poster paper.

Group Two:

Have the second group complete the same three tasks, but rather than talking about leaders, have them work through stereotypes and qualities of “servants.”

Bring the two groups back together.

Say something like: Today we are working together to come up with a definition of one specific type of person. I would like to invite Group One to share their definition with the group.

Hopefully there will be some confusion on the part of group two as they think about their own definition, which will ultimately be quite different. Allow this to percolate for a while and then invite Group Two to share their definition.

Action

Say something like: If you have been here with us for the past couple of weeks, you'll know that we have been looking at some of the paradoxes that we have to think through as we seek to follow Jesus. For those of us who haven't been here and don't know, or for those of us who have been here and don't remember, what is a paradox? (Have students give a brief review of paradoxes and, if necessary, paradigms.)

Tonight, we are going to be looking at one paradox that Jesus himself lived out and demonstrated all throughout his life and ministry...Servant Leadership. What do you think it means to be a "Servant Leader?" How would you define "servant leadership?" Do you think these two ideas can exist together?

Have the students break off into groups of 2-4 to discuss these ideas. Give each group a copy of the Lesson 3 handout and a pen and have them work through Part One by writing out their own definition of "servant leadership." Encourage them to look at the separate definitions that were developed earlier and consider ways to combine the two concepts.

Bring the group back together and come up with a group definition. You may want to record this on another piece of poster paper or on a black/white board.

Lead the students through a comparison of this new definition of "servant leadership" and the original definitions of "leaders" and "servants." What elements are the same, and which are different? How does the combination of terms, or the paradox, alter the understanding of the words "servant" and "leadership?" What happens to your understanding of these concepts when they are combined in this way?

Say something like: So far, we have been working through our own ideas of what it means to be a servant leader, but Jesus had a lot to say out it as well. Let's look at Jesus' thoughts on what it means to be a leader who is also a servant, and a servant who is also a leader, as well as how he lived those ideas out in real life.

Have the groups move on to Part Two of the handout.

Once they have completed this task, have the groups share some of their thoughts from the passages, and have them compare these concepts with the definition of Servant Leadership that they developed earlier. Ask the students to assess the group definition based on what they learned from the Bible passages, encouraging them to offer any additions or alterations. Ask them to suggest what this might look like in real life situations.

Consolidate/Debrief

Say something like: Tonight we have been looking at a new way of leading. We have talked about some of the stereotypes of both leaders and servants, and we have developed a new understanding of what it means to be a servant leader. Based on this new definition, think about your own life and the way that you interact with the people around you, and ask yourself if you are being a leader, a servant, or a servant leader. Also, think of one specific way you can try this next week!

If appropriate for your group, invite students to pair up or break off into small groups and discuss this question, as well as think about ways to be servant leaders to their friends and family, and in their schools or at work. Have the groups end by praying for one another that they will grow and develop as Servant Leaders to the people around them.