



Links Players

SERVANTS FIRST, LEADERS SECOND

“Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.” (Mark 10:43-44, NIV)

ONLY YESTERDAY, OUR COLLEAGUE TRACY HANSON wrote of her reprised experience at the US Senior Women’s Open, played last weekend at Pine Needles. For the second consecutive year, Tracy caddied for her friend Barb Bunkowsky.

It’s not the first time you’ve read of a seasoned tour player stepping into the “secondary” role of caddie. Only days after romping to victory at the 2000 US Open at Pebble Beach, Tiger Woods caddied for his college roommate Jerry Chang in a qualifier for the US Public Links Championship. Golfers love golf, and many of them will head out to the course no matter which side of the bag they’re on.

But to take up the caddie’s job, even when your player calls you “a team,” is to step into the role of a servant. It’s not the player who rakes the bunker for his caddie. It’s not the player who loops that bagstrap over her shoulder. The more seasoned a caddie becomes, the more services he can provide—but they’re still services!

What are *you* first? A servant?

You will often hear it said that those who take the upfront positions in the church—pastors or elders, say—are to be “servant-leaders.” In this construction, *servant* modifies *leader*. It suggests the type of leader you are.

But Jesus’ words recorded in Mark 10 (and similarly in Matthew 20) stress not a blending of ideas but a separation. “Over there are those exercising authority,” he said in so many words. “But over here you are to be servants.” Servants and leaders, not servant-leaders.

This does not mean that there are to be no leaders among believers. Besides pastors and elders, some exercise administrative gifts as given by the Holy Spirit. The day-to-day and even year-to-year responsibilities have to be taken up by certain leaders. Elders, Paul wrote to Timothy, are worthy of double honor. So leadership is a very good thing. But where we can get things backward is when we choose leaders and ask them to be servants. Rather, we should be identifying servants and calling them out to be leaders. This is the Jesus way: Be servants first (just in case you were looking for a good place to start!).

Opening questions Have you ever caddied? If so, what did you enjoy most about it? What do you find to be hard? • Who is someone you appreciate as a true servant in your life?

READING Mark 10:42-45; Romans 6:15-18; 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Jesus and servants (Mark 10)

What contrast did Jesus establish here? What side were his disciples supposed to fall on? How did Jesus set an example for them and for us?

Servants and slaves (Romans 6)

The Greek word for slave (*doulos*) is used in both Mark 10 and Romans 6. How does the idea of becoming a slave influence your thinking of adopting a servant’s position? How does Romans 6 explain that we are either slaves to one master or another? Which are you to be?

Seasoned servants (2 Timothy 2)

What kind of leadership traits are exercised by “the Lord’s servant” as described in this passage? Do you possess such traits? How might you acquire them?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2019 Links Players International.