

INTRODUCTION: What constitutes leadership and followership in the Kingdom of God, in the Church, and in society in general tend to be controversial in the Christian community. What are the proper responsibilities for leaders and what should leaders reasonably expect of those they lead? What should followers expect of their leaders? These are just a few of the questions at play. The purpose of this article is to take a Biblical view of leadership and followership with a word study of important terms and themes, in hope of clarifying expectations for the Church.

1. **The First Leadership Theme is “Subject and Submit”** – These words and the response they invoke for the Christian community need little introduction. The idea of being subject to the Spirit and to Scripture and submit to God ordained leaders will certainly provoke a spirited response from most parishioners in almost all churches. But what do these terms and theme really mean? The following study is from Zondervan’s New Encyclopedia of Bible Words. As in most AD articles, the *bold text* are from AD writers and editors, while the *unbolded text* are quotes from the noted resource. Occasional minor clarifications are included from AD in these quotes where the thought or concept is unclear – This theme [of being subject to and submitting to] is an extremely sensitive one and much misunderstood. What is the Bible's teaching on submission--in marriage and in other relationships?
 - a. In most occurrences in the New Testament, the words "submit," "subject," and "submission" in the NIV and NASB the Greek word is *hypotasso* or *hypotage*. These are words of *subjection*, implying that one subjects or subordinates himself or herself to someone or something else. They imply a responsive obedience to whoever or whatever one is subject to. Thus, citizens were subject to governing authorities, and slaves to masters.
 - b. These two words occur only three times in the Gospels but forty-one times in the Epistles. *Hypotage* ("subjection") appears only four times in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 9:13; Galatians 2:5; 1 Timothy 2:11; 3:4), whereas *hypotasso* ("to subject") appears forty times (Luke 2:51; 10:17, 20; Ro 8:7, 20; 10:3; 13:1, 5; 1 Corinthians 14:32, 34; 15:27, 28; 16:16; Ephesians 1:22; 5:21, 22, 24; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5, 9; 3:1; Hebrews 2:5, 8; 12:9; James 4:7; 1 Peter 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22; 5:5).
 - c. One other word, *hypeiko* occurs only once in the New Testament (Hebrews 13:17). The sense of the main clause of the verse is "Remain open to the persuasion of your leaders and be responsive to them."
 - d. **Critically important to being subject or submissive is the theme of Obedience and Disobedience – the second term/theme shown in the second part of this article below.**
 - e. In other passages where the NIV has "submit" or "subject," the concept is supplied by the translators to give English readers the sense of the Greek construction.
 - f. The Biblical concept of “to be subject to or submit to” is significantly different from the literal meaning of words. Even those well defined in their culture, cannot tell us how these words are used to develop or express a Biblical perspective. Perhaps this is particularly true with the concept of submission.

- g. A study of the passages dealing with submission show us that it is a complex concept. For instance, submission may be forced ("Even the demons submit to us" – Luke 10:17) or voluntary ("Submit yourselves, then, to God" - James 4:7). There is no question that the emphasis in the New Testament is on the voluntary submission by believers.
- h. The voluntary submission of believers involves existing social structures. Christians are to "submit . . . to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1), to "every authority instituted among men" (1 Peter 2:13). Though the New Testament applies this conceptual approach specifically to slaves, there are direct applications to the Christian community [in large] who are understood to be under the authority of God. **Bear in mind that the Christian counter-culture to whom the Scripture addresses were under subjugation by Roman socio-politico authorities. However, even in a free socio-politico environment, Christians are encouraged to both respect and honor their leaders.**
- i. Slaves are to submit and provide good service, even to harsh masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18). This calls for *voluntary submission in roles defined by one's culture* and makes no judgment at all on the justice or validity of particular institutions. It simply calls on the believer to live in the world *as it is* and in one's own culture to do what is expected of a good citizen or a good slave. If we wish, we can call this *situational submission*--a voluntary choice by the believer to do what is deemed right according to the norms of his or her own culture. Of course, Scripture is not dealing here with the exceptional case in which the culture calls "right" what God calls "wrong."
- j. Another area in which believers are called on to submit voluntarily is that of Christian interpersonal relationships. In their various roles in the body of Christ, Christians are to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). This responsiveness and willingness to yield to one another out of love should be extended not only by younger to older (1 Peter 5:5) but also by everyone to those who devote themselves "to the service of the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:15-16). This is in perfect harmony with the New Testament portrait of mutual concern among Christians and the surrender of one's own interests to those of others (Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3-4). It extends even to Christ's portrait of those who would be great among the disciples; they are to be slaves (*douloi*) to the other believers (Matthew 20:27).
- k. One of the critical questions in our day is that of the submission that the New Testament calls for from the wife to her husband. In the light of the times in which the New Testament was written, we may take this as *situational submission* in some contexts and perhaps as an interpersonal submission in others. *What is important for us to realize is that however we understand "submission" in such passages, it does not imply an inferiority of person. Submission is not a confession of inferiority nor an imposition of subjection under power or duress, but a demonstration of the fact that personal significance does not depend on one's role in society. The Christian is responsive to God, fulfilling his or her highest destiny in choosing to obey the Lord in the matter of submission.*
- l. The fact that submission is no admission of inferiority should be established for us by Luke 2:51, the first New Testament use of *hypotasso*. Luke states that after Jesus' visit to the temple at age

twelve, he returned with his parents to Nazareth and was "obedient" to them; literally, and in such other versions as King James Version, the Greek word is "subject." God himself entered our world in the person of Christ, and he himself willingly chose to submit and be subject to a parental authority that was appropriate to his condition as a child. Did submission make him inferior? Hardly, for he always remained who he was--God. Nor can submission make us inferior as persons, for we too remain who we are, children of God now, deeply loved and accepted by the Lord.

- 2. The Second Leadership Theme is “Obedience and Disobedience” – the following study is from Zondervan’s New Encyclopedia of Bible Words which explains** – Often our understanding of the Bible is subtly colored. When we read the Bible, we often import a tone of voice into our reading. The words we read may seem harsh or impersonal, or strident and demanding, not because they are so used in the Bible, but because we intuitively feel this way about the words themselves [in our own cultural setting]. This is particularly a danger when we read of obedience or disobedience. All too often the warmth and love that infuse the passages that speak of them are replaced by a cold impersonality that we bring with us and that robs the Scripture of its [intended] meaning.
- a. In the Old Testament there is a fundamental consistency with hearing and obeying. In Western Culture hearing and understanding are linked but are completely separate from the actions of obedience and disobedience to what you hear and understand... in other words, the moral and ethical imperatives have become disconnected from the truth you know and understand. This is an un-Biblical perspective.**
 - i. The basic word translated "obey" in the Old Testament is *sama*, "to hear." The Biblical concept stresses effective hearing – one who truly hears will comprehend and will respond with obedience. The Old Testament portrays obedience as the appropriate response of God's covenant people to God's revelation [in Scripture]. In this sense, obedience is the outward expression of a heart that has turned to God.
 - ii. Throughout the Old Testament, obedience is intimately associated with blessing. The person and generation that lives in intimate relationship with the Lord will experience the blessing he yearns to extend to his people. So, God promises, "Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, *and* you will live safely in the land. *Then* the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety" (Leviticus 25:18-19; cf. Deuteronomy 4:30). *God's call to obedience is, at the same time, a call to holiness and an invitation to blessing:* "Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 6:3).
 - iii. The obedience of the community enabled God to bless his people, [or perhaps more importantly for God's people to understand and receive God's blessings], but disobedience led necessarily to discipline. "See," God told them, "I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse--the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the

way that I command you today by following other gods" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). The consequences of obedience and disobedience were fully explained for Israel in Deuteronomy 28 and 30.

- iv. We need to hear both the promises and the warnings as they were uttered by God... i.e., in the warmest and most loving of tones. This is how the Old Testament believer who truly loved and trusted the Lord heard God's instructions on obedience and his warnings about disobedience. Thus, the psalmist did not regard God's call to obedience as a cold command that aroused resentment. Instead, his deep love for God enabled him to hear God's call as the loving invitation it truly was, an invitation filled with promise: "Do good to your servant according to your word, O LORD. Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees... The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold" (Psalm 119:65-68, 72).
- b. **In the New Testament there are** – Two different families of Greek words are linked with "obedience" and "disobedience." *Peitho* means "to convince" or "to persuade." It is logically linked with obedience; a person who is persuaded to obey a demand obeys it. This root is translated "obey" only three times in the NASB (Romans 2:8; Hebrew 13:17; James 3:3). Another word from the same root is much stronger and is used of obeying a superior. That word is *peitharcho*. It occurs four times in the New Testament (Acts 5:29, 32; 27:21; Titus 3:1). Disobedience is expressed by negative forms of this root: *apeithe*, *apeithes*, and *apeitheo*.
 - i. In most usages in the New Testament, disobedience is viewed as disobedience to God (except in Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2). Strikingly, disobedience does not stand in contrast in the New Testament with obedience but in contrast with faith. The reason for this critical linkage is explored by the writer of Hebrews [see section 'e' immediately below].
 - ii. The other family of Greek words for obedience and disobedience is, like the Old Testament concept, linked with hearing. The emphatic form of *akouo*, "to hear," is *hypakouo*, which in all its forms means "to obey." The sense here as in the Old Testament is that of a fundamental link between understanding and responding.
 - iii. Obedience can be spoken of as an attitude (2 Corinthians 2:9; Philippians 2:12) and most particularly as a faith-rooted disposition. In many contexts obedience to Christ or the gospel has the same meaning as faith in Christ and a faith response to the gospel (e.g., Romans 15:18; 16:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:8).
- c. **Obedience and disobedience in Jesus' teaching** – In Jesus' teaching which is based in the Old Testament, obedience is a relational term. *Obedience flows out of a personal relationship and is motivated only by love*. Thus, the reality of a relationship with God is demonstrated by one's obedience to him. This theme is developed in several key passages, particularly in the Last Supper discourse (John 14-17).

- i. The following are key statements in that discourse: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.... If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (14:21, 23, 24; 15:10).
 - ii. The picture provided here is vital. Obedience flows from a love relationship with God and cannot be generated by any other motivating force. Jesus maintained his own unique fellowship with the Father through that responsive relationship with him portrayed as obedience. We too maintain our fellowship with Jesus and the Father by responding to his words and teaching with obedience. Later, the apostle John picks up this theme and develops it. Obedience is one of those qualities that give the believer evidence that he is living in close fellowship with the Lord (1 John 2:3; 3:22, 24; 5:3).
- d. **The example of the obedience of Jesus** – In his discourse on obedience, Jesus held himself up as an example. Two passages from the Epistles examine Jesus' obedience. Philippians 2 is a call to the Christian to adopt a Christlike attitude. Jesus, who was devoid of pride, took on human nature. Then, "being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death... even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8). Subsequently Jesus was raised from death and was exalted to the highest place in our universe.
 - i. The passage has two lessons. First, if we maintain this attitude of Jesus, we will be able to work out the fullest possible expression of our salvation (2:12). Only when we live in full accord with God's will can our actions be in accord with his good purpose (2:13). In Jesus' full commitment to God's will for him, he demonstrated the level of commitment we are to achieve. And he showed us the result: exaltation. This is the second lesson about obedience. It produces blessing, but this blessing may not be experienced until resurrection occurs.
 - ii. Hebrews 5:7-10 also speaks of Jesus' obedience, especially his "learning" obedience and his "being made perfect" through it. The thought is that Jesus established his integrity by living a normal human life in which obedience was demanded. By actually living out obedience he was "perfected" in the sense of being demonstrably qualified to become "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey [i.e., believe in] him" (5:9).
- e. **The relationship between Obedience and faith** – Jesus spoke of our personal relationship with the Lord in terms of a love that generates obedience. The writer to the Hebrews examines the relationship of obedience to the responsive hearing of God's Word that expresses faith and trust in him.
 - i. First, disobedience stems from a hard heart (Hebrews 3:7-11). The heart is further characterized as "a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God" (v. 12). The modern reader is warned not to hear God today with a similarly hard heart. Both the

attitude and the resulting disobedience of the earlier generation was located in unbelief (v. 19).

- ii. Second, God has spoken in Scripture. One response to the Word is an expression of the sinful heart, which simply will not [refuses to] trust God. The response to this situation is disobedience. The other response, obedience, comes from a heart that trusts God, being persuaded that he is able to guide his people into rest (Hebrews 4:1-11).
- f. **Summary** – Greek and Hebrew words view obedience as a response. One hears, grasps what is communicated, and necessarily acts on it. Thus, obedience is essentially linked to God's revelation. God initiates by speaking; creatures respond by hearing and obeying.
 - i. In both Testaments, obedience is also closely linked with relationship. It was God's intention to guide his Old Testament people to blessing by speaking to them in statute and commandment. If they obeyed, they would find the blessing he yearned to give. If they disobeyed, they would find only tragedy and necessary discipline. Thus, the call to obedience in the Old Testament is God's loving invitation to blessing, and not some cold, impersonal command.
 - ii. In the New Testament, obedience is further demonstrated and analyzed. Jesus lived a life of obedience and in so doing demonstrated the exaltation that comes at last to the person who obeys God. Jesus' teaching linked obedience to love; only the person who loves God will obey him. The New Testament goes on to link obedience with faith; only the person who trusts God will obey him. *Thus, Biblically speaking, there is a definite and vital connection between faith in God, love for God, and obedience to God, and all are a result of God's work in a person's life.*
 - iii. The New Testament testifies that today as well as throughout redemptive history, an obedience that is motivated by love and exists as an expression of faith is necessary in order to stay close to God. We live in fellowship with God only as we hear and obey him.
 - iv. So, obedience properly understood, is never a cold or impersonal thing. God's call to obedience is a loving invitation to experience his best. Our response flows from a growing love for God and expresses our confidence that God is living and able. Only in a deep and loving relationship can the Biblical import of obedience be understood.

3. **The Third Leadership Theme is “Servant”** – Western thought doesn’t much care for the term servant, where to serve another is thought to be weak or condescending. Years ago Bob Dylan wrote a song titled “You Have to Serve Somebody” that addressed this issue, you’ll note the crowd is divided with many sitting and others standing and cheering – the link can be followed below

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=you+have+to+serve+somebody&&view=detail&mid=EC287DAF11985F676210EC287DAF11985F676210&&FORM=VRDGAR>

As you might expect, the response to the topic would be controversial. Dylan’s concept was of course Biblical, but in worldly terms the concept is repulsive. Biblically, Zondervan’s New Encyclopedia of Bible

Words explains the Biblical interpretation of servant as - a person who owes his allegiance to another. The most common Greek words are *dou'lo*" meaning *slave*, or *pai'*" meaning *boy* or *youth*, and less frequently by *qeravpwn*, meaning *servant (of a god)*, and *oijkevth*" meaning *household slave*. Other Greek words include *diavkono*" meaning *minister or helper*; *misqivo*" or *misqwtov*" meaning *hireling*; and *uJphrevth*" meaning *assistant, adjutant, or officer*.

- a. This terminology used often in the Old Testament to refer to slaves who were basically regarded as property, though under the law they were possessing certain rights (Exodus 21:1-11, Leviticus 25:39-55, Deuteronomy 15:1-18). In more instances, however, "servant" is a better translation than "slave" because the words have to do with service or obedience in a far more general sense than what is known today as slavery.
 - i. A servant can be anyone committed to someone more powerful than they are: e.g. a trusted steward (Genesis 24:2), a soldier in an army (Jerimiah 52:8), a court official (1 Samuel 8:14 f.), or a vassal king (2 Kings 17:3). Such a servant is dependent on their master for protection (16:7), and in turn agrees to fight if need be to protect or further the master's interests (10:3).
 - ii. A servant-master relationship can be a kind of covenant (e.g. Joshua 9:6 ff.), voluntarily undertaken with such words as "we are your servants" (Joshua 9:8; 2 Kings 10:5), or "I will be your servant" (2 Samuel 15:34). A servant addressing their master can express humility and dependence by speaking of themselves as "your servant." This may remind the master of their agreement, esp. if the servant is seeking help or protection, though in some instances it becomes little more than a formality, a polite substitute for "I."
 - iii. This "covenantal" use of servant terminology is especially conspicuous in passages where the servant is a servant of God. Elijah proclaims his allegiance to God with the words "I am thy servant" (1 Kings 18:36). Judges and Kings address the Lord much as any servant would address their earthly master (Judges 15:18; 1 Samuel 3:9; 14:41; 23:10 f.). Those who pray to God often refer to themselves as "thy servant" (e.g. 2 Samuel 7:19 ff., 27 ff. Psalm 19:11, 13; 27:9; 31:16) or "thy servants" (Psalm 90:13, 16), and appeal to God's dealings in the past with Moses "thy servant" (1 Kings 8:53; Nehemiah 9:14) or David (1 Kings 8:24 f.; Psalm 132:10, cf. 89:39). For His part, God acknowledges a person who gives allegiance to Him as "my servant" – e.g. Moses (2 Kings 21:8; Mal 4:4); Caleb (Numbers 14:24); David (2 Kings 19:34; Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24); Job (Job 1:8); Zerubbabel (Haggai 2:23), or unnamed Messianic figures (Isaiah 52:13; Zechariah 3:8). Prophets are called God's servants both individually (1 Kings 14:18; 2 Kings 14:25; Isa 20:3; 22:20) and as a group (2 Kings 17:13, 23; Ezekiel 38:17; Amos 3:7; Zechariah 1:6). In the widest sense of word usage the "servants of God" are the "people of God," meaning all the faithful of Israel [and by extension the Church] regarded either as God's "servants" (Isaiah 65:9) or collectively as "Israel my servant" (Isaiah 41:8 f.; cf. 44:1 f.; Psalm 136:22).

- iv. If the servant-master relationship is based on a kind of covenant it is natural that “people” of God and “servants” of God should often be parallel concepts (as, e.g. in Deuteronomy 32:36; Psalm 135:14; cf. Nehemiah 1:6; Psalm 105:25; Isaiah 63:17). And since the covenant is mediated to the people of God through individual “servants” (e.g. the patriarchs... Moses, the kings of Israel, and the prophets), it is not surprising that sometimes the “people” are seen in close association with a single “servant” who is regarded as their representative before God (e.g. 1 Kings 8:30, 52, 59, 66; cf. Nehemiah 1:11; Psalm 78:70 f.). What is conspicuously lacking in the Old Testament is the idea that a “servant of God” who exercises leadership over Israel is in some sense also a “servant of the people.” Neither the modern notion of a “public servant” nor the Roman Catholic ideal of a “servant of the servants of God” has any explicit analogy in the Old Testament. The closest approach to such a concept is perhaps the advice of the old men to Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12:7 (“be a servant to this people”), but it was advice that went unheeded.
- v. The range of meaning in the servant idea in the Old Testament is best illustrated in Leviticus 25:42, where servant is used in two senses: “they are my *servants*, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as *slaves*.” The covenant begins with redemption from slavery in Egypt, and to be servants in the covenant is not to be “slaves” of God but to be His people... meaning His sons and daughters (cf. Exodus 4:22 f.).
- b. In the New Testament as in the Old Testament, “servant” can refer to the people of God in general (Revelation 2:20; 19:5), to the prophets in particular (Revelation 10:7; 11:18), or to a prophet and his people together (Revelation 1:1). “Thy servant(s)” can still be a self-designation of those who address God in prayer (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:29; cf. Jesus’ use of “thy Son” in John 17:1). Moses and David (Revelation 15:3; Luke 1:69; Acts 4:25), as well as the community of Israel (Luke 1:54) can still be called God’s “servant,” but more typically this title passes to Jesus (Matthew 12:18; Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30; cf. Philippians 2:7). Decisive for this development is the identification of Jesus with the suffering servant of Isaiah 52:13-53:12, because of His sacrificial death (cf. Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 2:24 f.).
 - i. In terminology the New Testament differs from the LXX in distinguishing between *dou'lo* and *pai'* often (though not always) using the former to mean slave while the latter moves in the direction of child or son. New Testament writers can speak of slavery to sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:16), but also in a positive sense of slavery to Christ or to righteousness (Romans 6:16 ff.; 1 Corinthians 7:23). Paul himself indicates, however, that this language is a rather exceptional metaphor (Romans 6:18). When he and other writers call themselves “servant of Jesus Christ” it is not the metaphor of slavery, but the Old Testament covenantal use of “servant” which controls their thinking.
 - ii. To call oneself “servant” is simply the corollary of confessing Jesus Christ as “Lord.” In contrast to the Old Testament, a “servant of Jesus Christ” is also explicitly seen as a servant to the whole community of believers (Mark 10:43 f.; 2 Corinthians 4:5). Again the decisive

factor in the shift is Jesus, who reversed the customary patterns of authority (both pagan and Jewish) first by His teaching, and then by His own fulfillment of the servant role (Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 23:8-12; John 13:1-17).

J. R. Michae

4. SERVANT OF THE LORD (YAHWEH, JEHOVAH) – referring to the main character in the Book of Isaiah. The Servant Songs... Duhm's commentary on Isaiah (1892) distinguished four passages which modern criticism has generally agreed to treat as the "Servant Songs." They are Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12. The limits of the individual "Songs" are not clear; many would add 42:5-7; 49:7; 50:10, 11, and some would see a fifth Servant Song in 61:1 ff. [AD included link - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/1-biblical-literacy/Bible%20Survey%20-%2020.1%20-%20Prophets%20-%20Isaiah.pdf> – for more on these Servant Songs] The principle underlying the selection of these Songs is that they all portray a single distinctive figure: "the Servant of the Lord." The general tendency today is to interpret these poems in relation to their context in Isaiah, as an integral part of Isaiah's prophetic message. **Interpretation of the Servant includes the following:**

- a. **Is there a Servant-figure?** Some modern scholars (e.g., M. D. Hooker) dispute that these passages are intended to portray an individual Servant-figure. The term "servant" is one frequently used in the Old Testament for those who are obedient to God and is therefore probably applied to all of Israel as she fulfills her vocation.
 - i. Certainly, other figures in the Old Testament are described as "servants of God," especially the prophets, the patriarchs, and other individuals such as Moses and David (each of these frequently; see e.g. Genesis 26:24; Exodus 14:31; Deuteronomy 34:5; 2 Samuel 7:5; Isaiah 20:3; Amos 3:7). Thus, to refer to someone as "servant of the Lord" was no novelty.
 - ii. In Isaiah the term "servant" is used as frequently outside the Servant Songs as within. Note these passages in the vicinity of the Songs: 41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 48:20. All of these are applied to Israel, sometimes in terms similar to the language of the Songs. Thus, the imagery of the Servant could be Israel in its intended role of being a light to the nations
- b. **Who is the Servant?** Interpretations may be divided into three basic classes, the collective, the individual, and the cultic. The following interpretations advanced are usefully set out by C. R. North (*The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*, 6-116) and H. H. Rowley (*The Servant of the Lord*, 4-48).
 - i. *Collective interpretations* – The Servant is explicitly addressed as "Israel" in 49:3. This fact, and the close correspondence between the language of the Songs and that applied to Israel as God's Servant in surrounding chapters, have led many to see in the Servant-figure a projection of the prophet's ideal for the nation. It is the nation as a whole which is to undergo redemptive suffering. Others restrict the reference to a pious remnant within the nation, thus making allowance for the fact that the Servant has a mission *to Israel* (49:5, 6; cf. 42:6) and suffers *for* the people (53:4-6, 8, 11, 12). A further candidate for the title is the Davidic dynasty.

- ii. *Individual interpretations.* The Songs refer to the Servant in the singular and describe the life and experience of an individual (His birth, obedience, suffering, death, and triumph). That this is not a mere poetical personification of the nation is shown by His mission to Israel, as mentioned above. Interpreters have therefore taken the Servant as either a specific historical figure known to the author (e.g., Moses, Jeremiah, Cyrus, Zerubbabel, the prophet himself, or some unknown contemporary), or prophetically an ideal figure of the future—meaning the Messiah. This is more in keeping with the prophetic tone of Isaiah.
 - iii. *Cultic interpretations.* These interpretations, largely from Scandinavian scholars, see the background to the Servant-figure in a cultic ceremony, involving the symbolic death and rising again of the king, deriving from the Babylonian myth of the dying and rising god, Tammuz, and its liturgy. The Servant would, in this view, be neither a historical figure, past, present, or future, nor a collective personification of the nation, but a mythological symbol. The existence of such a mythology and ritual within Israel is highly controversial, and such interpretations have received little support outside Scandinavia.
 - iv. *Synthetic interpretations.* Few scholars today hold to an exclusively collective or an exclusively individual interpretation. Some would see a progression of thought from the collective figure of the earlier Servant Songs to a more fully individualized figure in the fourth. **The ideal for Israel was summed up in an ideal individual—the Messiah.** “What began as a personification (has) become a person” (Rowley). Such an understanding of the Servant is best able to do justice to the apparently conflicting evidence of the text, as mentioned above. (See esp. the close juxtaposition of 49:3, where the Servant was addressed as “Israel,” and 49:5, 6, where He had a mission to Israel.) It is reinforced by the growing recognition that the Israelite distinguished less sharply between the individual and the community than does the modern Western mind. The notion of “corporate personality” (associated particularly with the name of H. W. Robinson) makes it possible for the Messiah not only to act *for* Israel, but also to sum up Israel in Himself. The Servant, therefore, *is Israel*—a person who is the ideal Israel, who is capable of fulfilling the destiny of which the empirical Israel fell short. As such He can suffer and die to redeem the people of God, as their Representative as well as their Substitute. The subtlety of the prophet’s thought defies systematic analysis. It is in some such synthetic interpretation that the Biblical data will be most fully satisfied. *To describe the Servant as a messianic figure, in the sense of an individual who is central to the eschatological fulfillment of God’s purposes for His people, is therefore correct.* Though not an exhaustive description and a messianic application of the Servant passages, and especially of the passage where the individual terminology is clearest (52:13-53:12), will be in accordance with the intention of the prophet.
- c. **The character and mission of the Servant.** Working from the traditionally delimited Servant Songs (though the limitations of this approach have been indicated above), the following picture emerges:

- i. **Character.** The Servant was chosen by the Lord (42:1; 49:1) and endued with the Spirit (42:1); He was taught by the Lord (50:4) and found His strength in Him (49:2, 5). It was the Lord's will that He should suffer (53:10); He was weak, unimpressive, and scorned by men (52:14; 53:1-3, 7-9), meek (42:2), gentle (42:3), and uncomplaining (50:6; 53:7). Despite His innocence (53:9) He was subjected to constant suffering (50:6; 53:3, 8-10) so as to be reduced to near despair (49:4). But His trust was in the Lord (49:4; 50:7-9); He obeyed Him (50:4-5) and persevered (50:7) until He was victorious (42:4; 50:8, 9).
 - ii. **Mission.** His mission to Israel was to bring the rebellious nation back to God (49:5), but His work extended further: He was a light to the nations, bringing judgment and salvation to the end of the earth (42:1, 3, 4; 49:6). This mission was to be accomplished only through His suffering, in which He took the place of the people of the Lord, and bore the penalty that should be theirs (53:4-6, 8), interceding for them (53:12); His suffering ended in death (53:8, 9; 53:12), as a sin offering on their behalf (53:10), thus accomplishing their acquittal (53:11). His mission accomplished, He was exalted to glory and world-wide influence (52:13, 15; 53:12).
- d. **The Servant in later Judaism.** Possible echoes of the Servant-figure have been detected in the Old Testament itself, particularly in Zechariah 9-14; a meek and suffering figure occurs in 9:9, 10; 11:4-17; 12:10-14; 13:7-9. Interestingly, it is the character of the figure that is portrayed, rather than any verbal echo which might suggest the influence of the Servant in Isaiah.
 - i. In later Hellenistic Judaism there is little evidence of a messianic understanding of these passages, except what is implicit in the LXX translation of Isaiah 52:13-53:12. (See Zimmerli and Jeremias, *The Servant of God*, 42-44, 53-55.)
 - ii. In Palestinian Judaism, on the other hand, a persistent messianic exegesis exists side by side with an embarrassment at the idea of a suffering Messiah. Thus, the Targum of Jonathan on 52:13-53:12 explicitly identifies the Servant as the Messiah, but systematically manipulates the text to transfer every idea of suffering from the Servant to Israel, the Gentiles, or the wicked. Several other indications of a messianic exegesis in Palestinian Judaism are listed by Jeremias (Zimmerli and Jeremias, *op. cit.*, 59-79). While some are disputed, their overall significance far outweighs the few isolated indications of an interpretation of the Servant as either the nation or a historical individual. This is the more surprising in view of the apologetic use made of these passages by Christians. The rabbis generally preferred rather to ignore the Servant-idea than to interpret it as other than messianic. The evidence, therefore, suggests that in Palestinian Judaism of the time of Christ and afterward a messianic exegesis of the Servant was so firmly established that even the demands of the anti-Christian polemic could not unseat it.
- e. **The Servant in the NT – The New Testament writers are unanimous in stating both that the Servant is a Messianic figure, and that Jesus is the Servant.** What is in dispute is the extent of the influence of this figure in the New Testament. Some recent writers have argued that it was of

minor importance, and that Jesus' predictions of His suffering were based not on the Servant-idea, but on the "Son of Man" of Daniel 7 (especially theologian M. D. Hooker).

- i. **In the teaching of Jesus.** The only explicit quotation is Luke 22:37. The Servant is also clearly alluded to in Mark 10:45; 14:24, and possibly 9:12. In each of these cases the reference is to the suffering and death of Jesus, as the fulfillment of that predicted for the Servant. *In Mark 10:45 and 14:24 stress is laid on the redemptive purpose of that suffering, and its vicarious nature. There are also numerous predictions by Jesus that He must suffer, several of which base this necessity on Scripture (Matthew 26:54; Mark 9:12; 14:21, 49; Luke 18:31).* The most probable source of these predictions is the Servant-idea in Isaiah, the clearest indication of a suffering Messiah in the Old Testament, and *an idea which Jesus elsewhere applied explicitly to His own suffering*, rather than Daniel 7, a passage where the idea of suffering is not clearly applied to the central figure, and which Jesus applied only to His exaltation and power.
 - ii. It is relevant, too, that the heavenly voice at the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:11), which is generally agreed to allude to Isaiah 42:1, must have informed the subsequent view of His mission.
 - iii. Thus, the Servant-idea appears as a major factor in Jesus' understanding of His own mission as one of redemption through a vicarious suffering and death.
- a. **The Servant In the Rest of the NT.** The Servant-idea, though not as prominent as one might expect, is attested in most of the major strata of the New Testament. That Jesus was at an early stage given the title of *pai' Qeou* is seen by its use in Acts 3:13, 26 (Peter's speech – "When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.") and 4:27, 30 (the prayer of the church – "Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."). The title does not occur again, but explicit quotations from the Servant passages, with reference to Jesus and His Gospel, occur in Matthew 8:17; 12:18-21; John 12:38; Acts 8:32, 33; and Romans 10:16; 15:21. The emphasis in these quotations is not, however, as in Jesus' use of the passages, on the necessity of His redemptive suffering. This use of the Servant-idea is seen in some allusions in the theological writing esp. of Peter and Paul. Its influence has been traced especially in 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3; and Philippians 2:6-11. Further probable echoes are in Romans 4:25; 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21, and in John's use of the term "Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36; cf. Isaiah 53:7).
- b. The view of Jesus as the Servant of the Lord – while prominent in Jesus' own teaching, and preserved in the earlier parts of the NT, esp. in connection with the teaching of Peter, was later superseded by the titles "Lord" and "Son of God," though the fact of Christ's vicarious and atoning death, which the Servant passages explicitly teach, was firmly established as the basis of His redemptive work. The titles "Son of God" refers to Jesus' divinity, "Son of Man" refers to Jesus redemptive mission, and "Lord" refers to Jesus exercising God's authority over heaven and earth (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21; Acts 17:24).

5. IN CONCLUSION – SERVANT LEADERSHIP – Attempting to place this development of the themes necessary to leadership into a coherent narrative will be challenging, and we'll look to Scripture to integrate these thoughts.

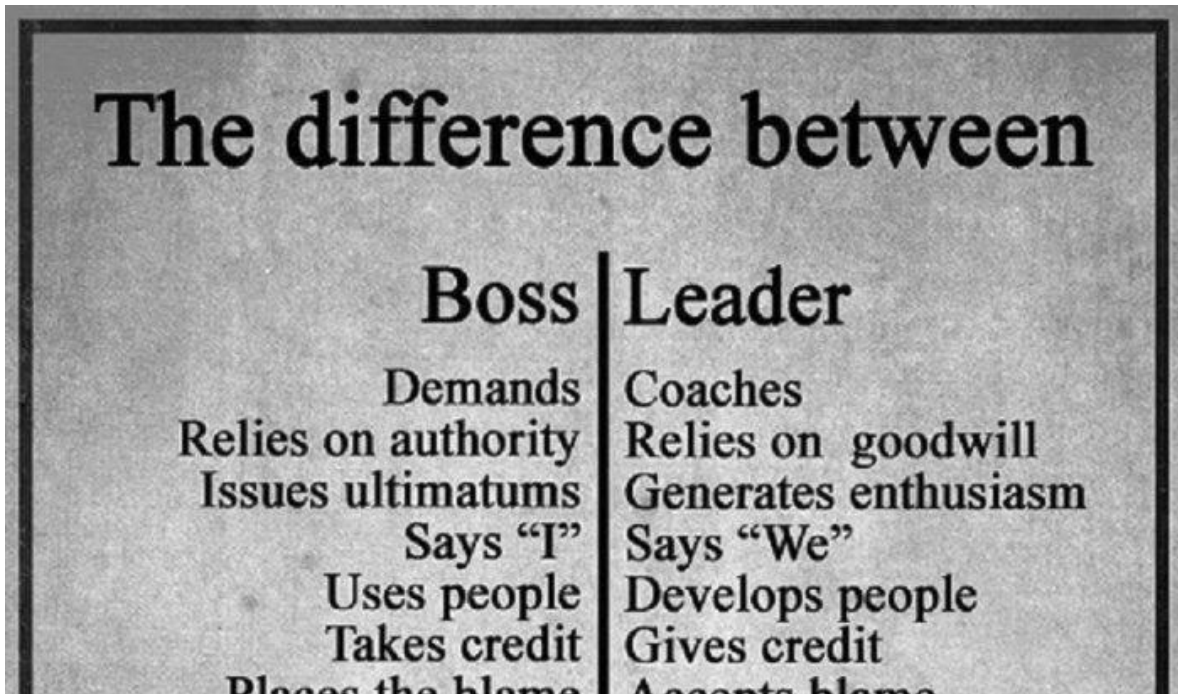
a. Here are some cogent verses:

- i. **John 13:13** – “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.”
- ii. **Luke 6:46** – “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”
- iii. **Acts 10:36-39a** – “The [Living] word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. *You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.*”
- iv. **Ephesians 3:20-27** – “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Husbands, love [and serve] your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.
- v. **Ephesians 6:1-9** – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate [frustrate] your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Slaves [servant workers], obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters [owners, administrators], treat your slaves [servants, constituents] in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.”

b. Many Christ followers have heard and even quoted these verses, but the key portion is Ephesians 5:25b – “Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” The example Paul is giving in this passage is sacrificial servant leadership. Whether in the family, at work, in the Church, or in public service... the directive is putting others ahead of yourself. Servant leaders accept responsibility for those they lead as a sacred trust to care for, encourage and develop as a

worshipful sacrifice. The modern standard of “what about me?” has been subverted for “what about these you have given me?” God expects us as leaders to act in the same way God acted for us personally and individually. This is not a popular leadership approach, but it is a Biblical one.

So, for those of us who are married, who have children, who serve in any form of leadership... do your wife, children, and employees have the conviction that you not only care for them but make it your priority to serve them? It may seem counterintuitive, but for those who employ servant leadership you will have happy and well-adjusted followers.



The difference between	
Boss	Leader
Demands	Coaches
Relies on authority	Relies on goodwill
Issues ultimatums	Generates enthusiasm
Says “I”	Says “We”
Uses people	Develops people
Takes credit	Gives credit
Places the blame	Accepts blame

The last line should read – Places the blame Accepts the Blame

A Boss [Lord] relies on the authority of their position and their ability to impose penalties including punishment and dismissal. Instead, a leader leads by example. A boss [lord] says “do what I say, while a leader says, “do what I do.” Jesus is God in the flesh, the ultimate authority, yet He led by example... we should as well.