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Foundations Reflection Guide

Part 5: Servant Leadership

This reflection guide is designed for uses for those who have listened or watched **Part 5: Servant Leadership**

It provides space to process the scriptures and apply the "Foundations" teaching.

The big idea in this session is how biblical leadership is fundamentally "upside down" compared to the power structures of the world, focusing on service, character, and relational accountability.

1. Leadership as a Gift, Not a Right

- **A different way:** In a world where everyone wants to be the boss, Jesus presents a different way. Biblical leadership is a gift from God intended for our safety, growth, and flourishing.
- **The Origin:** Leadership is ordained by God so that everyone—including the leaders themselves—remains under authority.
- **The Goal:** It is a dynamic process of influencing a group toward the purposes of Christ.
- **The Catalyst:** Whenever God wants to do something new, He raises up a leader, such as Moses, David, or Daniel.
- **Read Ephesians 4:11-12**

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Ephesians 4:11-12

- **Reflection:** Think of different types of leaders.
 - Can you identify any good leaders?
 - What qualities make them stand out?
 - Can you identify any bad leaders?
 - How did they fail in their leadership?
 - Can you name a good, effective leader in your life?
 - How did they inspire you?

2. Relational Oversight vs. Hierarchy

- **No solo Church:** The New Testament does not show independent, isolated churches; instead, it reveals a network of apostolic teams and local leaders partnered on a mission.
- **Read Acts 20:36-37**

When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him."

Acts 20:36-37

- Relationship over Bosses: Apostles were not the "employers" of local leaders but partners.
- Willing Submission: Local churches willingly submitted to outside gifts for the sake of their own growth.
- The Model: Leaders like Paul were viewed as beloved friends rather than overlords to be feared.

3. Biblical Church Governance

- **Congregational Model:**



In this model of local church governance, the structure is democratic, meaning the congregation holds the highest authority and votes on church matters.

- **Pro: High Ownership** – Because the members are directly involved in the decision-making process, there is often a high sense of personal investment and responsibility throughout the church.
- **Pro: Representative Service** – To fulfil the specific needs of the congregation, the members themselves appoint deacons and a Pastor to lead and serve the church.
- **Con: "Popularity Wins"** – A primary risk of this model is that decisions may be driven by what is popular among the majority rather than what is biblically sound or strategically wise.

- **Pastor/Vicar Model**



In this model of local church governance, authority is held by a single individual. This structure is often chosen for its efficiency, but it carries specific risks regarding long-term health and oversight.

- **Pro: Decisive Action** – Because authority rests with one person, the church can make decisions quickly and respond to needs without delay.
- **Pro: Mission Support** – The leader can appoint deacons and teams to help organise and execute the mission of the church.
- **Con: Lack of Accountability** – Without a shared leadership structure, there is a risk that the leader acts without necessary correction or oversight.

- **Con: Leadership Bottlenecks** – The church is often limited by the specific gifts, energy, and capacity of that one individual, which can hinder broader growth.

- **Senior Pastor and Elders Model**



This model utilizes a system of two-tier leadership; the hierarchy is clearly defined with the Senior Pastor positioned in a level of authority above a team of elders.

- **Pro: Efficiency and Safety** – This structure often allows for quick decision-making while still providing the "safety in numbers" that comes from a plurality of leadership.
- **Pro: Shared Responsibility** – Having multiple leaders means the weight of the church does not rest solely on one person's shoulders.
- **Con: Potential for Independence** – A significant risk in this model is that the lead pastor may act independently of the elders, potentially bypassing the accountability the team is meant to provide.
- **Con: Decision Delays** – While often efficient, the process of reaching a consensus among a plurality of leaders can sometimes cause decisions to take longer than in a single-leader model.

- **Read Acts 14:23**

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord...

Acts 14:23

- **Biblical Model:** While many models exist—from democratic congregationalism to single-leader hierarchies—the New Testament points toward a specific pattern for the local church.

Plurality of Elders: The Bible describes a group of elders who share equal authority, rather than one individual making all decisions with greater power.

4. Character Above All

- **Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13**

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Timothy 3:1-13

- **Elders and Deacons:** The above passage outlines that a healthy local church should be led by a team of overseers or elders and deacons.
 - **Elders:** These are men of high character and spiritual gifting, entrusted with the responsibility to govern and serve the local church together.
 - **Deacons:** These are male and female servant leaders who aid the elders in leading and serving the church family.
- **Character:** When selecting leaders, the Bible teaches us to focus more on what a person is like, rather than what they can do. While all leaders must be able to do the job at hand, God's values character above gifting.

5. Leading Like Jesus: The Ultimate Model

- **Read Mark 10:42-45**

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 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. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:42-45

- **Influence like Christ:** Whether you hold a formal title or not, all Christians are called to imitate the leadership style of Jesus.
- **Greatness through Service:** In the Kingdom of God, the "greater" the leader, the greater the server.
- **Submission:** Even though Jesus is fully God, He submitted to the Father.
- **Imitation:** Our goal is to live lives that lead others toward Christ.

Questions

1. **The Difference:** When you hear "servant leadership," what comes to mind? - How does it differ from the leadership you see in politics or corporate media?
2. **The Gift:** Leadership is a gift from God. How should this belief influence the behaviour of leaders and the way we choose to follow them?
3. **Accountability:** What are the dangers when a leader is not accountable?
4. **Biblical Example:** David is often called Israel's greatest king. What can his leadership inform our lives?
5. **Practical Application:** How can you practise servant leadership this week in your home, workplace, or church, even without a formal title?
6. **The Challenge:** True leadership is demonstrated by serving others—following Christ's example to guide others toward growth, unity, and deeper faith.