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# ****Being Servant Leaders: Following Christ's Example****

*Presented By*[*Dennis Luker*](http://www.ucg.org/author/dennis-luker)*on September 1, 2012*

## Do you consider yourself a servant leader? Let's take a look at what God's word says, and show you from the word of God that through the power of His Spirit, every single member of God's church - men, women, and children - all have been called to be servants and leaders in God's church and in God's coming Kingdom.

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Do you consider yourself a servant leader? I ask that question because I know a number of people, and have chatted with people sometimes, who don't. They just say, "You know, I want to be a servant. I want to learn how to be a leader. I want to be in God's Kingdom. I know what the future holds. But I'm not sure that I'm a good servant leader now."

I'd like to talk about that today, to take a look at what God's word says, and show you from the word of God that through the power of His Spirit, every single member of God's church - men, women, and children - all have been called to be servants and leaders in God's church and in God's coming Kingdom. We know that. We know that there's an awesome future lying ahead; but sometimes, maybe, we haven't figured out yet where we fit. "How can God use me?" I have had a number of the older brethren say to me, you know, "I used to be younger and healthier and strong and active and so involved in the church, but now I just feel kind of useless. I just don't feel like I'm able to do much anymore in the church and in the work." I want to show you how you serve and how you are a servant leader as well.

I don't know if any of you have been watching the political conventions or anything...I'm not a politician and I'm not Republican or Democrat or Independent or any of those things, but I'm a citizen of the Kingdom of God; and I certainly do pray about these things because I know it is God Almighty who will determine who the next President of the United States will be. He will determine that. The Bible makes it clear that He puts up one leader and He takes down another leader to fulfill His word and to fulfill His prophecies in the Bible. We all know that our nation and the world are in trouble, and it's getting worse every day. Our national problems are horrendous. What is it now? Over 16 trillion dollars in debt? America has more debt than all of the rest of the nations put together. It's very, very serious. And the problems of all the other nations of the earth are increasingly worse.

I think all of us are coming to see and know that we are approaching the time of the end. We don't know how many years yet, and we won't be speculating. We're not going to be doing that. "Well, we think now we have five years left or maybe ten, maybe fifteen." We don't know. All we know is we can see the events that are talked about in the Bible, about God's people - those who are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, called Israel - in the end time. We can see events in Europe, and we can see events in the Middle East, and we can see events in the Gentile nations, that the "times of the Gentiles" being spoken of in the Bible are fast approaching. So we know that we are nearing the end of the age. We see tensions building with the situation in Iran and the nuclear development of bombs there, and the decision that Israel, the Jews, will have to make eventually if other nations don't do anything to stop the development of their atomic weapons. And so, "all hell" could break loose tomorrow, next week, next month, before too long.

So we all know that time is running out in this life and in this age. Now, it doesn't mean that our lives are going to end. Time is going to go on. God has a great plan. But time is running out, brethren, for us to become the kind of servant leaders God has called us to be in His church; and that's what we're trying to be, and wanting to be, in the United Church of God. We have said from the beginning (and I say often), United is PART of the true Church of God. We're not ALL of the true Church of God. The true Church of God is composed of ALL of those that God has called and led to repentance, all those that have repented, have received the gift of His Holy Spirit; and God alone knows who all of those people are that are part of His church, because He alone calls people and leads them to repentance and gives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But we know, brethren, we are part of God's people. We have been called by God, and we know that we have been called to take [to the world ] the truth that God has given us, the knowledge of His awesome plan and purpose, His way of life, that can help people now. We must do our part to continue to share that with others while there is time so that God can call others, so they can come to know that the ONLY security is a relationship with God.

We are called now to learn how to become servant leaders, humble servants of God. We all look back over the history of our lives in the church - for many of us now it's been decades. Some of you are newer. Some of you, though, many of you, have grown up in the church, been born in the church, raised in the church. Others are new, being called along. But we look back at the history of our years and decades, and for LeeAnn and me now it's 52 years. We were called in the late 50s and baptized at Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, in 1960. So we've looked back and we realize that we have not, in the church and especially in the leadership in the church, always practiced what the Bible has taught about servant leadership, following the example of Jesus Christ.

We have our ABC students here this year, a wonderful group of them, who are here wanting to learn to serve God and become servants and leaders in God's church, so I'd like to encourage you today and inspire you today by reminding you again, looking at the word of God, that we are being called to be the new leaders of a new world that is coming and that we can kind of see off in that future, not too far off. It's not too far off now, and we must be ready. We must be qualified. We want to hear those words from Jesus Christ, you know, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter the joy of the Lord. You were faithful in a few things; I will make you ruler over many things." But we're not going to hear those words unless we are actually doing and practicing and living right now, following Christ's example, the attitude that He had, and doing it [as He did ]. Not just talking about it, but doing it, living it. And we want to. We desperately want to. We know we need to, desperately; and many of you have - I know that - for many years, been wonderful, true, humble servants.

What does being a servant leader mean? Is it really biblical? I'll never forget a number of years ago when this subject came up and it was presented to the Council and the ministry as "Christ-centered servant leadership." It seemed so exciting. We were so excited about it, that we're going to have a new approach, and the ministry will become the most humble servants of all. Christ-centered servant leadership. And it was exciting to think about and to conceive. But it didn't happen. There were too many objections, and some felt, "Well, Christ-centered servant leadership, that's kind of worldly. We shouldn't use that." So I'm not going to go back and rehash the past, but I'm just saying that we had the opportunity a number of years ago when this was presented to the ministry and to the church, especially the ministry - those who are supposed to set the example and are supposed to demonstrate and show God's way, how to be Christ-centered servant leaders. What we finally decided to call it is just Christlike service, if you remember.

What does being a servant leader really mean? Is it biblical? First, let's take a look at that; and then let's look at the model that Jesus Christ set. He broke the mold of His day, didn't He? It was astonishing, the example that He set and what He did for us. Our challenge as men and women is to teach our children and to set the example for our children so they grow up understanding what it means to be a servant leader, because children are leaders, too. They really are. And women are leaders. Men servants and maid servants. Women are as much leaders as men are. We just have different roles right now in our family and in the marriage and in the church. But you know, ladies, all of you know that the end result for every man, woman, and child is going to end up being in God's family in God's Kingdom as a leader, a ruler, a teacher, a priest of God and of Jesus Christ. That's the end result for everyone.

First, let's just take a look at servant leadership. I've had a few say, "Why do we say it that way?" Leadership scares people away. There are people who don't want to be leaders, but maybe they misunderstand. These ladies who stood up and sang, they're leaders and they used a gift that God gave them, a talent that God gave them to serve. So they're servant leaders. Everyone has been given different gifts, different talents, different abilities; and some are learning to use them to serve. But we're all leaders, either good ones or bad ones...or not leaders at all because of fear. We don't want to be like that man who was given the talent in Matthew 25 and he buried it and he hid it; and Christ came and said, "What have you done with what I gave you?" "I buried it. I was afraid. You're a hard man." And He called him a wicked and lazy servant. We don't want to be like that. I know you don't. None of us does.

Let's go to **Matthew 20** . Mr. Victor Kubik covered this this morning in his presentation to our leadership group, but you weren't all there. Let's go back, all of us. We can never read this too many times. We know very, very clearly from scripture that "servant" is the term used over and over again, that we are to be servants of other people.

Matthew 20:25-26**–**But Jesus called them,His disciples,to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,"lord it over the people,"and those who are great exercise authority over them."They oppress the people."Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you..."Stopping and thinking about this one, don't we all, in that sense, want to be great? Maybe it would be better described as we all want to be a success. We all want to be good at what we do. We all want to help others be successes and do good and, in that sense, be "great" at what we do. We all want that. If you want to become great, Jesus gave the key to it and the answer and the solution: Become a servant. Diakonos in the Greek means serve others, become a servant.

So in that sense, the word "minister" means servant, doesn't it? Some are ordained servants, ordained in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Anyone, though, can be a servant. You don't have to wait to be ordained. I think you all know that. You don't have to wait to be recognized or be ordained and, although we need more and more ordained leaders and men and women, you don't have to wait until somebody recognizes you. A minister [might say ], "I'm going to recognize him or her and recommend them for ordination." You don't have to wait.

Jesus said, **v. 27** – "Whoever desires to be first among you..."

Do any of you here want to be last? No. I think I've never played a game [and wanted to be last]. When I play games, I play to win. When I'm in a race, I run to win. When I play sports, I play to win. Don't you? So none of us wants to be last. We really do want to be first, but not to the exclusion of others. What He is saying is if you want to be a real leader, then become a slave. It's a different Greek word here. It's doulos and it means a bond slave - really make yourself a bond slave to help other people; devote your life to that.

This was revolutionary, of course, because in the Roman Empire, with emperors and rulers and the captains of the armies, they flaunted their leadership and oppressed the people.

Matthew 20:28**–**"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

We heard about that in the songs today, so we know these scriptures well. The challenge for me, brethren, and for you is, how do I do it? How do I practice and live what Jesus Christ said to do? We'll talk about that more because we all want that, don't we? We don't want to be motivated by selfishness or by laziness or by our carnal minds and attitudes. Yet, that's what we struggle with in the flesh; but there are ways and there are answers from God.

Go to **Matthew 25** . When we talk about what is our calling today and in the future, clearly from scripture we know it's to be servants. Some said, "I want to be a servant. I just want to be at the door and open the door and let people come in and out." But we also want to be leaders. God wants us all to develop leadership. We'll see that as well.

Matthew 25:14 , the parable of the talents – "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them."

We know this is a parable Christ used to illustrate that God has given us all different skills, talents, and abilities. Everybody has them. Sometimes people don't think they have them because of the way they have been treated growing up.

I got a letter from a member of God's church, I won't say where. He's about ninety years old now. But when I gave a sermon on encouragement a while back, he heard it and he wrote me a letter and said, "Thank you for that because," he said, "when I grew up, no matter how hard I tried, I was never encouraged, EVER, as a child. And I was always just put down. No matter what I did, it was correction. That made me feel stupid and dumb, and it's only by the grace of God and His calling that I survived." And so, some people, unfortunately, grow up in an environment where they don't think they have much to offer in life. "I'm just kind of dumb or stupid. I was behind the door when God passed out the gifts and the talents." You may know people that way that just lack...they weren't built up with the proper kind of confidence as a child or a young adult growing up. Not vanity or ego in a wrong way, but recognizing that "I'm a child of God, and God gives every one of His children talents and gifts and abilities and skills." And He wants us to develop them and become leaders. And so, that's kind of what the parable here is about.

Picking it up in **v. 19** – "After a long time the Lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them."

Well, that's going to happen to each one of us. In a right, good, Godly way, it scares me! I know and I know that I know that some day I'm going to stand in front of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. The Bible says so, that we will each give account of ourselves to God and to Jesus Christ. We will stand in front of Him and He's going to say, "Denny, I called you way back then..." Thankfully, the song [we just heard ] reminds us He'll say "Not guilty." And that [song ] was beautiful."I called you back then. I gave you this many decades in the church. I gave you these talents and abilities and this personality and this temperament, and now I want to talk to you about how you took what I gave you and how you used it. And then I'm going to tell you what you're going to do in My Kingdom in service for this thousand years and on into the future." That's how I look at it. What's coming is that some day I'll stand in front of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who set the example clearly in the Bible of how I'm supposed to live and what I'm supposed to do. And I know that He knows I know. He has opened the understanding of His word to me, graciously; and I'm going to have to some day say, "Yeah, I did read that. Over and over and over I read that in Your word, Lord." So there's coming a time...and I'm not afraid of it in a wrong, fearful way; but I fear God because I know God expects me to produce and bear fruit so I can serve Him and serve this world.

Christ says to those whom He gave various talents...you know, some people maybe have higher IQs, some people maybe seem to have all kinds of great talents and gifts and abilities and they can do this and they can do that and they can do everything. They are just multi-talented people. Well, they need to use all those talents! You know, the one that got five talents, **v. 20-21** , "...'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.I developed and used the talents and skills and abilities You gave me, to serve in life, to serve my community, to serve where I work, to serve at school, to serve my family, to serve unconverted people, to serve in your church.'"We're supposed to do that, everywhere we are, to be lights in the world. And what did God say to him? We know. Those are those words we all want to hear. "His Lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant...'"So we know that we're called to be servants in this life. "'...you were faithful over a few things...'"God doesn't expect more of us than we are capable of; but He does expect us to be faithful over the things that He gives us, the opportunities that He gives us, the challenges, to use the trials to learn and to grow; and if we are just faithful, if we will never give up and quit, even though we get discouraged and Satan tries to cause us sometimes to want to give up and quit through our trials and tests, we will not. But Jesus, His words are, "'I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.'"

I think you all know that parable pretty well. But that also is a parable spoken by Jesus Christ, which makes it very clear that He expects us to become faithful servants. We never get to the point where we say, "I'm too old, too weak, too sick...I can't grow any more. I can't serve any more. I can't learn any more. I can't change any more." That's easy. I know. I'm up there, too. At one point, LeeAnn said, "Well, Denny..." I shouldn't tell her age, but she's five years younger than I am, if you know my age; so we talked about this. "How long can we keep going?" Well, we can keep going as long as God wants us to. That's how long we can keep going. Where will we serve? We will serve wherever God wants us to. That's where we'll serve. We hope someday it's back home in the Northwest, where our kids and grandkids and great grandkids and our family members are. We hope someday that's His goal, but it's wherever He wants us to serve. We've all given our lives to God - that's the commitment at baptism - a long time ago. And so LeeAnn reminds me of that and I remind her of that, "Honey, you know, when we were baptized, our commitment was, 'God, I give you my life. Thank you for calling me, for forgiving me of my sins. Thank you for washing my sins away under the blood of Jesus Christ. Thank you for giving me your Holy Spirit and helping me; and I give You my life, the rest of my life, to serve You.'"

We are definitely called to be servants. What about leaders? Is it ok to use the term? "I want to be a servant, but I really don't want any leadership position." Do they go hand in hand? Now, you don't have to be a leader, necessarily, who is standing up here like I am or somebody who stands up in front of people and speaks. You don't have to be that kind of leader; but whatever you do, wherever you are, you ARE a leader. Let's just go to **John 10** . We're all leaders. No matter what we do, no matter where we are, we're leaders, leaders setting an example. Let's read here, John 10:1-4 , about Jesus Christ.

John 10:1-4**–**"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."He's talking about Him being the Good Shepherd and He is the door, the door to the Kingdom."But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."

You can read this whole section, but I wanted to bring out here that we all know Jesus Christ is the ultimate leader. He's not only the greatest servant who ever lived, humanly, on this earth; but He was also a leader. With the Bible, we know that. It makes it clear. But sometimes...and I'm just asking you and anyone out there, would you call yourself a leader? Can people follow you? Here's what Paul said, especially in the Authorized King James Version... different words are used in some of the newer translations, but in the Authorized King James , Paul wrote this:

1 Corinthians 11:1**–**Follow me as I follow Christ.

So Paul was a leader, and he said to the brethren, "Follow me AS I follow Christ." So you are a leader, every single one of you, no matter what your age is, no matter how old or young you are. You're a leader, and leaders lead by example most of all. We know that. Read any good books you want on leadership and you'll find that the first and most important factor, quality, of leadership is lead by example. If you don't lead by example, eventually it will be obvious you're not a leader people can follow because you don't lead by example. So let's think about that for a moment.

Look at 1 Timothy 4:12 at what Paul said to a young man that he was mentoring and training and working with. Here's what he said to him. Some of you may say, "Well, I'm too young. Nobody's going to respect me." But Paul said to him [Timothy ]:

1 Timothy 4:12**–**Let no one despise your youth... well, how can you keep people from despising if you're young? Well, he said to be an example! He is telling him [to be an example ] to the brethren, to the believers. "A lot of them are probably older than you are, Timothy, but be an example to the believers in word,how you talk, what you say, clean up your language, speak properly; in conduct,in how you live;in love - that's godly love - in your love for people, let it show as an example;inyour spirit..." We heard that this morning as Dick was talking about Caleb and Joshua in the Bible and it's mentioned that Caleb had a "different spirit," he and Joshua...and"in faith, in purity."And that can be a real challenge for young people today, in the world that we live in.

So being an example is the greatest and most important quality of leadership of all.As I look back over the years...now, leaders can slip and fail. Leaders can make mistakes. Leaders can sin. Leaders do! They fall short, so it doesn't mean that you never make mistakes; but, like David, you repent of them, and God restores you.

We tend to think of "lead with your strengths." I've got books on that, and that's good. I want to learn to lead with my strengths and abilities and talents God has given me. But, you know, I'm going to share with you as we get into the message a little bit later on, another way that I've learned to lead. I'm going to show you how God is calling people who have become servant leaders because of their weaknesses.

Some struggle with alcoholism, sexual addiction, homosexuality, everything that you can imagine; and they have taken that weakness in their life, that struggle, that battle in their life, that sin in their life and, with God's help and the help of others, have overcome and have grown and are now a part of some of our education programs in the United Church of God - the "Focused Education" programs and a new website that we are developing, [the "**Breaking Free**" website](http://breakingfree.ucg.org/) . You can go there and read articles on United's website, all from church members, some ministers, elders, but many of them not. You'll read articles and stories of peoples' lives in God's church who have overcome everything you can imagine. They are servant leaders, but they're quiet and they're behind the scenes, because most of them, you know, "Well, look, I'm a servant leader because I was an alcoholic." Our biggest helpers now in these programs in the United Church of God are people, many of them unknown, who are leaders, who have taken their greatest weaknesses in their lives and, by the grace of God and the mercy of God and the help of God and the help of others and the love that they have received, they have been overcomers. And now they want to use those things in their lives to become servant leaders. Very few know them, I would say, especially in the area of homosexuality. Some of those that I know have said, "If God is calling anybody else with this problem and I can help them, let me know." Some have been in the church for decades, and that was what God called them out of and their struggle that they have dealt with. God is working miracles.

So this thing of being a servant leader, it can be anywhere and everywhere at every level that you can imagine, that you can become a servant leader of God. And example is the most powerful leadership trait of all in a good leader, even if the leader sins. Children, you know, sometimes parents can slip and sin and make mistakes; and it's good for children to learn that Mom and Dad are not perfect and if they make a mistake or do something wrong, it's a learning experience so that when children grow up, they don't expect, "I've got to be perfect all the time, never make any mistakes." That's not a good way to grow up. It's a goal that we want to improve and do better.

I hope you understand that perfectionism can be a problem because people who think they can become perfect in the flesh are always dealing with the guilt of falling short and not being perfect. We want to be; we strive to be; we desire to be; we can grow and do better. We improve; we overcome. We do all of those things; but it's impossible, as long as you are in the human flesh, to become perfect. We will be someday.

What I am saying is that being a servant leader is like King David. God used his life, thankfully, as an example of a great leader with great strengths and abilities but who sinned mightily, some of the worst sins committed in the Bible, you know, as king - taking advantage of his position, his authority, his power, misusing it, committing adultery with Bathsheba, plotting to murder her husband. Horrendous! And God gives him a chance to repent, leads him to repentance, and David does eventually come to repentance. Then God records all of that and uses David's life [as an example ]. Psalm 51 is a wonderful psalm, isn't it? David is saying, "God, forgive me, cleanse me, and don't take Your Holy Spirit from me." He was a converted man, one of the few in the Old Testament who received God's Spirit. "Don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore me and renew me, and I will for the rest of my life, God, I promise, I will teach sinners your way." Sometimes it takes people who know they are sinners and who have sinned and fall short, who have been through forgiveness and repentance and God restores them, who can talk to somebody else in a way that another person couldn't, and say, "God loves you. He knows you, and He died for you."

Servant leadership is an awesome thing, and it's what this world desperately is going to need. Let's look at two of the most important qualities of true servants. There are many qualities that leaders need. We just talked about the importance of example.

Even falling short and sinning and repenting and being restored and renewed and having a heart of compassion and mercy is servant leadership and helping people. I thank God that God not only has helped me to use my strengths but...I don't want to say too much, but I grew up in an alcoholic family. My father was an alcoholic. He was a good man. He's dead now, but my Dad had a drinking problem, alcoholism, back before it was really understood. It was just thought it was a moral problem and a lack of character and all, but he just had an addiction. He had become addicted to alcohol. It was a drug. He was a strong man, strong-willed; but he couldn't stop the drinking in his life. He fought it and he fought it, and I'll see him in the second resurrection someday, so I won't say bad things about my Dad, who was also very supportive of me.

Some people when they drink, they are called funny drunks or silly drunks. You know, the more they drink, they get kind of silly and happy and goofy and all of that; and then others become mean drunks. My Dad, the more he drank, the meaner he became. And so, there was that kind of problem in our family growing up. I was the oldest of five children; and as this problem developed in our family, the way I handled my Dad's anger and all the other problems that happened in the family was I retreated into my own world, as a child will do. And so, I had no friends. I didn't build any friendships or relationships, never dated girls, never dated one single girl through high school, my whole years there. It was mainly just sports and academics that I went through. And so, it wasn't until after God called me that I came to realize and understand why I was so shut-down emotionally. It was because of my childhood, the alcoholism, the anger and violence in the family, and the problems they created there in my life.

After God called me, when I began to come across others in the church - and even some of the ministers - who had serious drinking problems, I began to want to understand and want to help in that area. So that's why I am involved in Focused Education and have, since the beginning of the formation of United Church of God, been involved and been a part of our Focused Education programs. It is because God helped me to take something that at one point I was ashamed of, something from my past, [and use it to help others ]. I would be what some of the books on it [alcoholism ] would call the adult child of an alcoholic. I was an adult. I had grown up, but I was the product of an alcoholic father, who loved me but who had a serious addiction and problem with drinking.

I never intended to be a minister. I have an engineering degree. That was what I was doing when God called me, and I didn't go to Ambassador College to become a minister. Furthest thing from mind! And yet, that's what happened. And in my years in the church I began to observe...now, I don't want to give too much away because I'll speak to the leadership group later. One of the sections that I'm going to give is on alcohol addiction and how it develops. The number one drug problem in the church, by far, is alcohol - socially acceptable, publicly OK.

Because of my past and my background and that thing in my life or that weakness, you might say, I began to see how Satan has used it to cause so much damage in the church today. He will use anything that he can, but he especially uses drugs, doesn't he? He likes to cloud the minds of people. People will do things when they have had too much alcohol or other drugs that they would NEVER normally do if they were in a sound mind. And I began to see that and observe that in the church and even in the ministry at times, and that's just A factor. I'm not saying it's the ONLY factor, but we're going to take a look at the fact that Satan has used alcohol and its misuse and its abuse to destroy many lives and cause much damage in the Church of God. We want to turn that around, and we want to grow in these areas. And so, the door is open in this area of servant leadership.

Let's look at two of those most important qualities. John 15:12-13 . "If we hear Denny Luker speak, he's probably going to talk about love." Well, yeah, I don't read the internet much out there, but, you know, "He's so liberal. You watch. They're going to do away with the Sabbath. It's all love, love, love." Yeah, it is. God's love. It's not man's love, human love, carnal love, relationship love, friendship love. It's the love of God, agapelove, divine love; and there isn't anything more important than that.

John 15:12**–**"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

Again, when we talk about love, we need to distinguish. This is God's love, which is unselfish love. It's not friendship love, it's not philia love, brotherly love. It's not sexual love, it's not eroslove. It's not romantic love. It's not marriage love. It's God's love. It's divine love, a much higher love, a sacrificial love. The love of God and the love of Jesus Christ.

**V. 13 –**"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."   
  
To be willing to give your life in service to others or to die for others. And notice Matthew 5:44 .  
  
This one may be even more difficult to do because some could say, "Yeah, I've got friends that I think I would give my life for." Notice Matthew 5:44:

Matthew 5:44**–**Christ said, "But I say to you, love your enemies..."It doesn't say they're your best friends. It's not that kind of love. It's agapelove. Love them with a Godly love. "...bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you..."So whenever I hear somebody has spoken evil of me or said evil of me or done evil, I go back to God and say, "God, help me to practice this. Help me to not speak evil of them. Help me not to return evil for evil and resort to their tactics. It's not your way." Pray for them. Ask God to bless them, and by blessing them, I mean, "God, please lead them to repentance. Lead me to repentance. Lead them to repentance." "Do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you..."

That's not normal to do, not human, carnal to do that. It's converted to practice that. It takes God's Spirit to practice and live and do that. So there is nothing more powerful than this kind of love, the love of God. One more scripture in this one, 1 Corinthians 13. This is why I will always say, the most important fruit of God's Spirit, the most important quality of God's nature, is His love, His unconditional, faithful love. Notice what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:2-3 :

1 Corinthians 13:2**–**And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith... Faith is important. But let's read what he says...so that I could remove mountains...

What he is saying here, "I can understand all the prophecy and the mysteries of the Bible, I can have all the knowledge of the Bible, I can have great faith, but if I am not motivated internally by the love of God, I am nothing." Once that sank into my heart - and maybe yours as well - and I grasped it...we as human beings, we all have vanity and ego and selfishness and carnality. We're trying to change that with God's help and become more converted; but if that inner motivation for every decision you make and everything you do, if it is not motivated by the love of God, it's going to come to nothing. That's what I have seen over the years, as you have, in the church. The only way I'm going to endure and make it and the only way you're going to endure and make it, the only way anyone else is going to endure and make it, is if they are motivated by the love of God. Everything else is going to fail. Let's read on.

**V. 3 –**And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned... you could go that far, but if it isn't the love of God that's motivating me to do that - maybe I'm just laying down my body, you know, "I'm going to show people how righteous I am," (in my own eyes). So what he is saying, you can do all these religious things and good things, but if the internal motivation within your heart is not out of the love of God, of serving, giving, helping, humbling, he says,it profits me nothing.

Notice **v. 13** – And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

What we need most in the Church of God, in the ministry, is men and women, leaders everywhere that every day pray, "God, please help me today to be renewed with Your love and help me to be motivated by Your love. Not by my needs for recognition, not by my needs for, whatever they are, but by Your love, please, Father."

Notice that first sentence in **v. 8**   – [God's] love never fails.

That's the only thing that I know will never fail, God's love. God will never fail, and God is love. So that's the most important quality of all of true servant leaders. And it is what Jesus Christ emphasized at the end of His life, over and over and over. This is how they will know, how the world will eventually know, who are His true disciples by the way we're going to love one another, to the very end. No matter what comes, no matter what happens, no matter how tough or bad it gets, love does not fail. And God's love won't fail. That's why you and I are going to make it into God's Kingdom. It's not because we deserve it or that we earn it, it's because of the love of God.

Let's look at the other quality, as I said, the two most important qualities of true servant leaders that we need in the ministry and in the church and in the world. For the second one, let's go to John 13, the gospel of John 13:13-15 . Again, familiar scriptures to most of us, an incredible example by Jesus Christ. He set the example of love, of suffering and dying for us, and He set the example of true humility. He says:

John 13:13-14**–**"You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Imagine, nobody had ever done this. Can you imagine these disciples here as their Lord, their Master, their Teacher, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as He gets down and He begins to do this, to wash their feet? They had never experienced that before at all. Peter didn't want Him to do it. He said, "You're not going to wash my feet." And Christ said, "Peter, if you don't want Me to wash your feet, you have no part with Me."

**V. 15 –**"For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

So Jesus Christ, who was God in the flesh...here's God, here's the one who was the Word, who was with God in the beginning, through whom God created all things, the Word who became flesh, Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, now down on His knees, washing the dirty, smelly feet of His disciples. It's an incredible example of just true humility and the way that He wants us to go.

I won't go to **Philippians 2** . We've read that many times, that He emptied Himself of His power and His glory and was willing to empty Himself of His privileges and come down to this earth to become a servant. He came down to become a servant and to humble Himself to the death. I hope we can do that and I hope that we, instead of getting up on our high horse and our egos and...Aaron Dean talked about that in his session this morning, his fifty years or so in the church. He's been in the church his whole life, but he talked of his experiences in the church over the years and, unfortunately, how so many have come and gone. He was bringing out that God tests us all in different ways in the church.

Many times He will test us all by giving us opportunities of service. Some might call it a position, but it's better [described ] as opportunities of service, responsibilities; and then people get into those responsibilities and those jobs over the years, and they don't want to let go of them. They don't want to mentor and train new people, younger people to come along and take over that job. They just kind of, "My job, my responsibility." They don't want to let go. Some, not everybody. I'm not saying everybody's been that way, but it has been that way for some in the past. They just don't understand that what God will do, He'll give us responsibilities to see how we do serving in those responsibilities; and then He will, many times, allow us to be removed from that position, that opportunity to serve, and see how we handle that. Many of you have been through that in the church over the years, and maybe that's an even bigger test. When God says I'm going to give someone else that job or that opportunity, then you just say, "Yes, Lord. Where else can I serve? How else can I help? I'm not looking for position. I'm not looking for recognition. I'm not looking that I have to be ordained into the ministry in this life before Christ comes. That's not what I'm looking for. I just want to serve. I want to be a servant."

So, these two qualities - being motivated by God's love every day in your life and this incredible humility of attitude - and that doesn't mean you don't recognize your talents and gifts and abilities. I hope I'm making that clear. It just means you know that you don't have anything you weren't given, that you weren't born with, that wasn't given to you by God through your parents and ancestors. Any gifts, talents, abilities - anything we have - were given to us; and we recognize that, humbly. So let's all keep growing together and helping one another grow in all of these qualities.

It's about time for me to begin to wrap it up. I will close by looking, briefly, at our roles of servant leaders in the body of Jesus Christ today. This is something that we are really sincerely wanting to work on together - the administration, the Council of Elders, all of us. Our team here at the home office, you know, we just hope that when people come into the home office, they will see and feel and sense the genuine love that is here for one another, that they will see truly humble attitudes from everybody, from all of us together, that there will be a different spirit that emanates and radiates from all of us here, that it will spread to every congregation.

I know that I work for the Council of Elders. They gave me this job. They can remove me from this job anytime they want to. I recognize that and understand that and totally accept that. And, you know, if I'm down here and they say, "Denny, thanks for the job you've done. It's much appreciated. You can go home now," all right! We'll go home! But we'll still be serving, and you'll still be hearing from us in different ways. It isn't going to be, "OK, it's all over then." It's going to be, "OK, God, what's next in our lives? How can we serve now? How can we use the years of experience and all that You've given us to continue to serve the brethren, help the church, and help the work and prepare for Your coming Kingdom?" That's what we want and are striving for and praying that God Almighty and Jesus Christ will help us, brethren, in the ministry and all of you together, help us to really do it this time.

God has given us another chance. I know there are hurts. I know there are wounds. I know it's not all over yet, you know, the last thing that we've been through. There is a lot of that. I know it's still out there, but I also know that becoming this way [servant leaders ] can help bring about that healing in the church. I tell people, "Look, you've got to look beyond the present time because we're all going to be back together again, all of God's people." We're all going to be back together again. There's only one church. There's only going to be one bride to marry Jesus Christ. And whatever it takes, God will bring all of His people back together again. It's a matter of when He does it and how He does it, but I know that's going to happen, so I carry no grudges, bitterness, resentment, or hard feelings toward anyone about anything. I'm sorry it happened, but we're moving on. And that's what we want to do in United. We're not better than any other group. We don't say that; we don't claim that. I don't believe that. I'd better not! That's not God's Spirit and attitude. And someday we'll be working together, once again.

Everyone is on his own journey to the Kingdom of God - all of our brethren - and I just hope all of God's people everywhere will be growing in servant leadership. Following the model set by Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior, using not only our strengths and our abilities to serve and be servant leaders, but also learning to use the weaknesses in our lives and the things that maybe have been our biggest sins or greatest problems of the past and to learn to use those weaknesses and take those and...you could come to me or Gary Antion, who is over our education programs, or Don Hooser, who is coordinating our [*Breaking Free*](http://breakingfree.ucg.org/)[website](http://breakingfree.ucg.org/) on the United Church of God website, and you go to that and you'll see, as I said earlier, all these articles written by members of the church on all of these other issues, where people could go there who need help, hope, and encouragement and read stories of other members who have become servant leaders, using their greatest weaknesses and problems.

That's what we're going to be doing when Christ comes back. God is calling and training people who have every issue and problem that exists in the world. It's going to be a broken, suffering world; and God is training us now, brethren, so that when Christ comes back and we begin the Kingdom of God, there's going to be a need for a lot of healing, as you know. Servant leaders. That's what's going to be needed. God is going to give us the authority and the power that we need, but we are going to have to be the kind of servant leaders who are motivated by the love of God and true humility.

So I'll close, brethren. Thank you. Thanks to all of you, God's people. Thank you, brethren, here, wherever...if you hear this. If you're out there on the internet, thank you for your faith in God. Thank you for being a servant leader. Pray about it. Ask God, "God, please help me to be the kind of servant leader in Your church, wherever I am, that You want me to be. You know me better than I know myself, God. Help me, please. Help me take my life and my talents and abilities and skills and use them to serve and to help others in any way that I possibly can. And God, maybe You could even take some of my problems and faults and sins and help me to overcome and grow so that I can become a part of the programs within the church, helping others that are struggling with these things."

So brethren, let us grow together. I ask you to please pray for me, for the Council of Elders, for the administration here at the home office. Please keep us in your prayers. Please, brethren, ask God to help us set the example of true servant leadership so that we can and will be prepared to assist Jesus Christ when He returns, the greatest Servant Leader of all.