



Learning to *Lead* Like Jesus

HOW GOD USED EDUCATION AND
LIFE EXPERIENCE TO SHAPE
MY MINISTRY CALLING



*Reflecting on how God used both education
and life experience to teach me the servant
leadership principles modeled by Jesus Christ.*



OPENING SCRIPTURE

*"For even the Son of Man came not to
be served but to serve others and to
give His life as a ransom for many."*

— Mark 10:45 (NLT)



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A Personal Note

Thank you for taking the time to study God's Word through this resource.

My prayer is that every page points you to Jesus Christ rather than to me. Any wisdom found in these pages comes from God's Word and from His faithful work in my own life. My desire is simply to faithfully teach His Word, encourage your walk with Him, and help you continue growing into the disciple He has created you to be.

Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, I pray this study strengthens your faith, deepens your understanding of God's truth, and encourages you to live as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

“Pointing people to the hope, healing, and transformation found in Jesus Christ.”

Contact

If this resource has encouraged you and you would like additional Bible studies, discipleship resources, leadership materials, or prayer, I would be honored to hear from you.

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God used both education and life experience to teach me the Servant leadership principles modeled by Jesus Christ.

Introduction

One of the greatest blessings of my educational journey has been discovering that God uses both life experiences and formal education to shape His Servants for Ministry. Throughout my Doctor of Christian Leadership program, I have studied biblical leadership, Spiritual Formation, Discipleship, organizational leadership, and Ministry development. While every course has contributed to my growth, one of the most influential books I encountered was *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership* by Wilkes (1998).

Wilkes (1998) identifies seven principles that characterized the leadership of Jesus Christ: humility, obedience to the Father's will, servant-hearted greatness, identity rooted in God, service over status, shared responsibility, and building others to fulfill God's vision.

As I reflected on these principles, I realized God had been teaching me many of these same lessons through my personal experiences long before I encountered them in the classroom. *The Imitation of Christ* further deepened this understanding, where Kempis (1996) wrote, "Truly to know and despise self is the best and most perfect counsel. To think of oneself as nothing, and always to think well and highly of others is the best and most perfect wisdom" (p. 4). His words echo the humility of Jesus and challenged me to continually examine my motives for ministry.

My life has included seasons of rejection, trauma, loss, grief, chronic health challenges, and spiritual growth. Through them, God has taught me dependence, perseverance, compassion, and humility. My formal education helped me understand biblically what God had already been teaching me experientially. Together, life experience and education have shaped my understanding of leadership and strengthened my ministry calling.

As I continue building the ministry God has entrusted to me, I desire to lead according to the example of Jesus Christ, using the seven principles identified by Wilkes (1998) as a framework for faithful servant leadership.



1. Jesus Humbled Himself and Allowed God to Exalt Him

The first principle Wilkes (1998) identifies is that Jesus humbled Himself and allowed God to exalt Him. This principle has become one of the most significant lessons in both my educational journey and my personal walk with Christ. The world often teaches leaders to pursue recognition, influence, and success. Jesus demonstrated an entirely different model. Rather than seeking status, He willingly humbled Himself in obedience to the Father. His leadership flowed from humility rather than self-promotion. As Paul wrote,

"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, think of others as better than yourselves... You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had."

Philippians 2:3–5

Jesus demonstrated that humility by willingly taking the form of a Servant and becoming obedient to death on a Cross.

Philippians 2:6–11

As I studied servant leadership throughout my doctoral coursework, I began to recognize how easily leadership can become focused on personal achievement rather than faithful service. My education continually brought me back to the example of Christ, reminding me that ministry is never about building my platform but about faithfully serving God's people and bringing Him glory.

Yet God had already been teaching me this lesson long before I entered the classroom. Seasons of rejection, abandonment, loss, chronic illness, and disappointment stripped away many things I once depended upon for identity and security. Through those painful seasons, God taught me that my worth is found in Him, not in recognition from others. Kempis (1996) and Edwards (2019) both reinforce this truth by showing that true wisdom, love, and Christlike leadership are rooted in humility rather than pride. James also reminds believers,

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up in honor."

James 4:10

This principle has become more meaningful as I have matured in life and ministry. I no longer want to strive for recognition but to trust God with my obedience. If He opens doors or blesses this ministry, it will be in His perfect timing. My prayer is that He alone receives the glory. If this ministry encourages believers or points hurting people to Christ, it will be because of God's faithfulness and grace.

My responsibility is not to seek recognition but to remain faithful to the work He has entrusted to me. **(Matthew 20:26)**

2. Jesus Followed His Father's Will Rather Than Seeking a Position

The second principle Wilkes (1998) identifies is that Jesus followed His Father's Will rather than seeking a position of power or authority. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus consistently demonstrated complete obedience to the Father. His decisions were never driven by personal ambition, public approval, or earthly success. Instead, every aspect of His life was centered on fulfilling the mission the Father had given Him.

Jesus declared,

"For I have come down from heaven to do the Will of God who sent me, not to do my own Will"

John 6:38

His entire earthly Ministry was characterized by submission to the Father's Purposes, culminating in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane:

"Yet I want your Will to be done, not mine"

Luke 22:42

These passages reveal that true leadership begins with surrender before it ever becomes service.

This principle challenged me deeply throughout my educational journey. Like many people entering Ministry, I initially viewed education primarily as a means of gaining knowledge and developing Ministry skills. While education certainly accomplishes those goals, God gradually revealed that His greater purpose was Spiritual Formation.

He was not merely preparing me to do Ministry; He was preparing me to become the kind of Servant who could faithfully represent Him.

As I progressed through my doctoral studies, I encountered courses on Spiritual Formation, Discipleship, Christian Leadership, and the life of Christ. Again, I was reminded that God's primary concern is not our position but our obedience. His kingdom does not operate according to the world's definition of success. God is not impressed by titles, degrees, accomplishments, or recognition. He desires faithful Servants who willingly follow Him wherever He leads.

My personal experiences reinforced this lesson. Throughout my life, there were seasons when my plans did not unfold as I expected. I experienced disappointment, grief, health challenges, financial uncertainty, and circumstances that derailed the future I had envisioned.

Looking back, however, I can now see that God was not delaying His plan—He was developing my character. He was teaching me to surrender my plans so that I could embrace His.

One of the most difficult lessons I have learned is that obedience often requires releasing control. I have always wanted to understand where God was leading before taking the next step. Yet, time after time, He asked me to trust Him before revealing the entire path. Through prayer, Scripture, and the guidance I received throughout my education,

I learned that faith is not having every answer; faith is taking the next step because God has proven Himself trustworthy.

Kempis (1996) expressed this beautifully when he wrote, "It is a very great thing to obey, to live under a superior and not to be one's own master" (p. 15). His Words reminded me that spiritual maturity requires surrendering our desires, ambitions, and opinions to the Lord.

Obedience is not simply following God when His direction aligns with our preferences; it is trusting Him when His plans stretch our faith and require complete dependence upon Him.

My doctoral studies continually reinforced this biblical perspective. As I studied Christian Leadership, I realized that effective ministry flows from submission to God rather than personal achievement. While leadership strategies, organizational development, and ministry planning all have value, they can never replace a heart that is fully surrendered to Christ. Biblical leadership always begins with obedience.

Jesus Himself taught this Truth when He said,

"If you love me, obey my commandments."

John 14:15

Love for Christ is demonstrated not merely through words but through faithful obedience. This has become one of the defining principles of my own ministry. My desire is not to build a ministry according to my vision but to participate in what God is already doing. Whether through writing, teaching, Discipleship, mentoring, or developing online resources, I want every aspect of this ministry to reflect His purposes rather than my own ambitions.

One of the clearest examples of this has been the development of my ministry website. There have been many moments when the project felt overwhelming. At times I questioned whether I possessed the knowledge, abilities, or resources necessary to accomplish what God had placed on my heart. Yet He continually reminded me that success is never measured by my abilities but by my willingness to obey. God does not

call His people because they are sufficient in themselves; He equips those whom He calls (**cf. 2 Corinthians 3:5–6**).

My education has provided practical knowledge for leadership and ministry development, while my life experiences have taught me dependence upon God. Together they have shown me that leadership is an act of obedience born out of a relationship with Christ.

As I continue following God's calling, I am learning that true leadership is not about climbing higher but about surrendering more completely. Jesus never sought a position; He sought the Father's Will. If I desire to lead like Jesus, then obedience must remain at the center of everything I do. As Proverbs reminds us,

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart... Seek His Will in all you do, and He Will show you which path to take"

Proverbs 3:5–6

3. Jesus Defined Greatness as Serving Others

The third principle Wilkes (1998) identifies is that Jesus defined greatness as serving others by becoming a Servant. This principle stands in direct contrast to the way leadership is often understood in our culture. The world frequently measures greatness by influence, recognition, power, wealth, or achievement. Jesus measured greatness by humility, sacrificial service, and love for others.

Jesus declared,

"Whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many"

Matthew 20:27–28

These words summarize the very heart of biblical leadership. Greatness in God's Kingdom is never about elevating we but about faithfully serving others for His glory.

Throughout my educational journey, this Truth repeatedly emerged in my studies. Whether examining the life of Christ, Spiritual Formation, Discipleship, or Servant leadership, I discovered that biblical leadership is fundamentally different from worldly leadership. Jesus consistently taught that those who desire to lead must first learn to serve.

This principle resonates deeply with my ministry calling because serving others has become one of the central themes of my life. Long before I entered doctoral studies, God was using difficult experiences to develop compassion within me. Through personal struggles, grief, rejection, trauma, chronic health challenges, and seasons of loneliness, I gained a deeper understanding of the burdens many people carry.

At times, I questioned why God allowed me to experience so many hardships. As my education progressed and my relationship with Christ deepened, I began to understand

that God often uses our deepest wounds to prepare us for ministry. The struggles that once seemed meaningless became opportunities to develop empathy, compassion, patience, and a greater ability to minister to others.

As Paul reminds believers, God.

"comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others."

2 Corinthians 1:3–4

Looking back, I can now see His faithfulness even in the painful seasons.

One of the greatest lessons my education has taught me is that ministry is not primarily about communicating information. It is about helping people encounter the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Knowledge is valuable, but knowledge alone does not heal broken hearts or change lives. People need biblical Truth presented with grace, compassion, humility, and genuine love.

Kempis (1996) expressed a similar concern when he wrote, "Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life eases the mind, and a clean conscience inspires great trust in God" (p. 4). His Words challenged me to remember that education should never become an end. Instead, it should deepen our love for Christ and better equip us to serve His people.

My studies in spiritual formation reinforced this understanding. Lowe and Lowe (2021) explain that genuine spiritual growth takes place as believers mature within Christ-centered relationships where Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the community of faith work together to shape lives. That truth has continually reminded me that effective ministry involves more than teaching biblical content—it involves walking alongside people as they grow into mature followers of Jesus Christ.

This lesson has profoundly shaped my approach to ministry. **My goal is not simply to share information or demonstrate what I have learned academically.** Rather, I desire to use the knowledge and experiences God has entrusted to me to help others experience healing, hope, restoration, and spiritual growth. Every Bible study I write, every resource I develop, every testimony I share, and every conversation I have is an opportunity to point someone toward Jesus Christ.

The development of my ministry website reflects this calling. God has continually reminded me that its purpose is not to build a personal platform but to create a place where hurting people can encounter biblical truth, find encouragement, and experience the hope found only in Christ. Many who visit may feel abandoned, discouraged, spiritually weary, or overwhelmed by life's circumstances. My prayer is that every page directs them beyond me and toward the Savior who alone can heal, restore, and transform their lives.

Another lesson I have learned through both education and experience is that serving others requires a heart marked by peace and humility. Kempis (1996) wisely observed, "First keep peace with yourself; then you will be able to bring peace to others" (p. 65). He goes on to explain that a peaceful person brings good to others, while a restless and discontented spirit is easily overcome by suspicion and neglects what matters most (Kempis, 1996). God has spent many years teaching me forgiveness, surrender, and complete dependence upon Him so that I can minister from a place of healing rather than from unresolved wounds. As I have learned to abide more deeply in Christ, He has replaced bitterness with peace, pride with humility, and self-reliance with trust in His strength.

Jesus taught, *"Remain in me, and I will remain in you,"* reminding us that lasting spiritual fruit is produced only through a life that remains rooted in Him. Ministry that flows from an abiding relationship with Christ will always be more effective than ministry driven by pain, pride, or performance.

The more I study the life of Jesus, the more I realize that greatness in God's Kingdom is measured not by how many people know our name but by how faithfully we reflect His character. Jesus washed His Disciples' feet (**John 13:12–17**), welcomed the outcast, comforted the brokenhearted, and gave His life for the salvation of the world. His example demonstrates that leadership is not about elevating we but about lifting others toward Christ.

My education has provided the theological and practical foundations of servant leadership, while my personal experiences have taught me what it feels like to need the compassion and encouragement of others. Together, they have strengthened my commitment to a ministry centered on serving people rather than seeking recognition.

As I continue pursuing God's calling, I desire for my life and ministry to reflect the example of Jesus Christ. If greatness in God's Kingdom is measured by faithful service, then my prayer is to serve wherever God leads, however He chooses to use me, always remembering the words of Peter:

"God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another."

1 Peter 4:10

4. Jesus Risked Serving Others Because He Knew He Was God's Son

The fourth principle Wilkes (1998) identifies is that Jesus risked serving others because He knew who He was. Jesus did not serve from a place of insecurity, fear, or a desire for approval. He served confidently because His identity was firmly rooted in His relationship with the Father. Knowing who He was gave Him the freedom to humble Himself, love others sacrificially, and fulfill His mission without being controlled by the opinions of others.

At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, the Father declared,

"This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

Matthew 3:17

Before Jesus performed a miracle, preached a sermon, or called His Disciples, His identity had already been affirmed by the Father. Throughout His ministry, Jesus remained secure in that identity, allowing Him to serve others with humility rather than striving for recognition or acceptance.

As I studied this principle, I realized how foundational identity is to effective Christian Leadership. Many people spend their lives searching for significance, acceptance, and worth. When our identity is built upon the opinions of others, our accomplishments, or our circumstances, we become vulnerable to discouragement, fear, and insecurity. However, when our identity is rooted in Christ, we are freed to serve others without constantly seeking validation.

This truth has been one of the most transformative lessons of both my personal life and my educational journey.

For much of my life, my identity was shaped by painful experiences. Childhood trauma, rejection, abandonment, broken relationships, loss, chronic illness, and years of struggling with feelings of inadequacy influenced how I viewed myself. Like many who have experienced deep wounds, I often measured my worth by how others treated me or whether I felt accepted and valued.

God, however, had a different story to write.

Through His Word, prayer, Spiritual Formation, wise biblical counseling, and my doctoral studies, He gradually began teaching me that my identity is not found in my past, my failures, my pain, or the opinions of others. My identity is found in Jesus Christ. As Paul reminds believers,

"Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

2 Corinthians 5:17

That truth has become one of the foundational realities of my spiritual journey.

One of the most significant areas of study during my doctoral program has been Spiritual Formation. Through these courses, I learned that transformation occurs as the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to reshape not only our behavior but also the way we think about ourselves and about God. Wilhoit emphasizes that authentic Spiritual Formation begins with understanding our identity as beloved children of God rather than attempting to earn His acceptance through performance (Wilhoit, 2008). That insight

helped deepen my understanding that growth in Christ flows from who we are in Him rather than from what we accomplish for Him.

Likewise, Lowe and Lowe (2021) explain that lasting spiritual formation occurs as believers are shaped through Scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the community of faith. As I reflected on my own journey, I realized that God used each of those means to replace the lies I had believed about myself with the truth of His Word.

Kempis (1996) wrote, "Be humble and peaceful, and Jesus Will be with you" (p. 75). This simple statement reminds me that confidence in ministry does not come from self-reliance but from abiding in Christ. The closer I draw to Him, the more secure I become in who He says I am. Kempis also reminds believers not to place their trust in human approval because people will inevitably disappoint us. Instead, we are to cling to Christ, whose love remains faithful and unchanging (Kempis, 1996).

This truth has become deeply personal. There have been seasons when relationships changed, people walked away, and circumstances left me feeling alone. Yet through every season, Jesus remained faithful. He continually reminded me that His love does not fluctuate with my circumstances and that my identity rests securely in Him.

My education has helped me understand that identity in Christ is not merely a theological concept; it is the foundation of effective Christian Leadership. Leaders who are secure in Christ can serve without demanding recognition. They can give generously without expecting anything in return. They can love sacrificially because their worth is already established by God's grace rather than by human praise.

This principle has profoundly influenced the ministry God has called me to build. My desire is not to create a ministry that draws attention to me but one that continually points people to Jesus Christ. I want every Bible study, testimony, discipleship resource, and ministry opportunity to remind people that true healing begins when they discover who they are in Him.

Edwards (2019) likewise teaches that a Christian spirit is "opposite to a selfish spirit" (pp. 160–161). He explains that sin turned humanity inward toward self-love, but through Christ's redeeming work believers are restored to lives marked by love for God and others. The more I have studied servant leadership, the more I have realized that leadership rooted in Christ is not about pursuing recognition or proving our worth. Instead, it flows from a heart transformed by God's love and is expressed through humble service to others. As Jesus said, *"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."* My desire is not to build a ministry that draws attention to me but one that faithfully points people to Jesus Christ.

Looking back, I can clearly see how both education and personal experience have worked together to strengthen my identity in Christ. My experiences revealed my need for healing, while my education provided biblical understanding and practical tools

that helped me embrace God's truth. Together, they moved me from finding my identity in my circumstances to finding my identity in Christ alone.

Jesus could risk serving others because He knew He was the Son of God. As I continue growing in my relationship with Him, I am learning to serve from that same place of confidence—not confidence in myself, but confidence in the One who calls me His own. As **John** reminds believers,

"See how much our Father loves us, for He calls us His children, and that is what we are!"

1 John 3:1

5. Jesus Left His Place at the Head Table to Serve the Needs of Others

The fifth principle Wilkes (1998) identifies is that Jesus left His place at the head table to serve the needs of others. This principle became one of the most powerful lessons I learned about leadership from Jesus. Wilkes contrasts what he calls the "head-table mentality" with the servant leadership modeled by Jesus. Rather than seeking positions of honor, recognition, or prestige, Jesus willingly laid aside His rights and chose the towel and washbasin instead of the seat of honor (Wilkes, 1998).

The Gospel of John provides one of the clearest pictures of this Servant leadership. During the Last Supper, Jesus rose from the table, wrapped a towel around His waist, and washed His Disciples' feet **John 13:3–17**. The Creator of the universe willingly performed the task of the lowest servant. Afterward, He told **His Disciples**, *"I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you"* (**John 13:15**). Jesus demonstrated that leadership is never about demanding service from others but about willingly serving them.

As I reflected on this principle, I realized how easily leadership—even within Christian Ministry—can become focused on position rather than service. The world often measures success by titles, accomplishments, authority, influence, or public recognition. God's Kingdom measures success by faithfulness, humility, and obedience.

My education continually challenged me to think differently about leadership. Throughout my doctoral studies, I repeatedly encountered the truth that leadership in God's Kingdom is fundamentally different from leadership in the world. Christian Leadership is not about climbing higher but about kneeling lower. It is not about gaining prominence but about faithfully serving wherever God places us.

This lesson has become especially meaningful because much of my ministry calling has developed through opportunities that were quiet, personal, and often unseen by others. Some of the most significant ministry moments in my life have not occurred from a platform or behind a pulpit. They have happened while listening to someone who was hurting, praying with a discouraged believer, sharing my testimony, encouraging a friend, or simply being present with someone during a difficult season.

Those experiences taught me something my education later confirmed: some of God's greatest work is accomplished through ordinary acts of faithful service.

Kempis (1996) challenged believers to "love to be unknown and considered as nothing" (p 4). When I first encountered those words, they challenged my understanding of success. Our culture often encourages visibility and recognition, but Scripture consistently points us toward humility. True servants do not need applause because their greatest desire is to please Christ.

Jesus reinforced this truth when He taught,

"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted"

Matthew 23:12

Over time, God has shown me that faithfulness is far more important than visibility. Whether a ministry reaches thousands of people or quietly ministers to one hurting soul, every act of obedience matters when it is done for His glory.

As I have developed my ministry website and written biblical resources, God has continually reminded me of this perspective. The purpose has never been to build a personal platform but to create a place where people can encounter biblical truth, experience hope, and deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. Whether many people visit or only a few, my calling remains the same—to faithfully serve those whom God brings a cross my path.

Yount (2010) also emphasizes that Jesus developed His followers not simply by giving information but by modeling a life they could imitate. Throughout His ministry, Jesus demonstrated humility, compassion, and servant leadership before asking His disciples to do the same. That reminder has influenced how I think about ministry today. People often learn as much from the life we live as from the words we teach.

My studies in Spiritual Formation have reinforced this same truth. Spiritual maturity is not measured by how widely we are known but by how faithfully we reflect the character of Jesus Christ. The more I study His life, the more I see Him moving toward those whom society overlooked—the poor, the outcast, the brokenhearted, and the spiritually weary. He consistently met people where they were and ministered to their deepest needs.

This understanding has profoundly shaped my ministry vision. God has called me to serve broken, hurting, and spiritually weary people. Many of those individuals may never stand behind a pulpit, lead a ministry, or receive public recognition, yet are deeply loved by God. If Jesus willingly left places of honor to serve others, then I desire for my ministry to reflect that same Servant-hearted compassion.

Kempis (1996) also reminds believers that peace and spiritual maturity develop as we focus on our walk with Christ rather than comparing ourselves with others. That truth

has been invaluable throughout my educational journey. Academic accomplishments, ministry opportunities, and personal growth can all become sources of pride if we lose sight of God's grace. The more I learn, the more I recognize how completely I depend upon Him.

Looking back, I can clearly see that both education and life experience have taught me the same lesson: leadership is not about sitting at the head table. It is about picking up the towel and faithfully serving wherever God calls us. The world celebrates prominence, but Christ honors faithful Servants.

As I continue pursuing God's calling, my prayer is that my life and ministry will never be defined by recognition or status but by faithfulness to Jesus Christ. May I always be willing to leave the head table, walk among the people God has entrusted to me, and point them to **the One** who

"did not come to be served but to serve" Mark 10:45

6. Jesus Shared Responsibility and Authority with Those He Called to Lead

The sixth principle Wilkes (1998) identifies is that Jesus shared responsibility and authority with those He called to lead. Although Jesus possessed all authority as the Son of God, He did not attempt to accomplish His mission alone. Instead, He intentionally invested in others by teaching, equipping, encouraging, and empowering them before entrusting them to continue His work after His ascension.

This principle has become increasingly meaningful throughout my educational journey. early in my ministry calling, I often assumed that faithfulness meant doing everything myself. Like many who are enthusiastic about serving God, I believed that taking responsibility meant personally carrying every burden. Over time, however, both my life experiences and my education revealed that God's design for ministry is built upon discipleship, community, and shared responsibility.

Jesus never intended His followers to minister alone. Throughout His earthly ministry, He called ordinary men to walk beside Him, observe His example, ask questions, participate in ministry, and eventually carry the gospel to the nations. Before returning to heaven, He commissioned them by saying,

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations... Teach these new Disciples to obey all the commands I have given you."

Matthew 28:19–20

His command was not merely to gain converts but to develop disciples who would continue making disciples.

One of the recurring themes throughout my doctoral studies has been the importance of Spiritual Formation within Christian community. God never intended believers to grow in isolation. He designed the church to be a living body where believers encourage one another, strengthen one another, bear one another's burdens, and mature together in Christ. Repeatedly, my coursework emphasized that spiritual growth flourishes within healthy, Christ-centered relationships.

Lowe and Lowe (2021) deepened my understanding of this biblical principle by demonstrating that Spiritual Formation is not simply an individual pursuit but one that develops within an environment shaped by Scripture, the Holy Spirit, intentional relationships, and the faith community. Their work reinforced what I observed throughout the Gospels: Jesus developed His Disciples through daily life together. They learned by listening to His teaching, observing His example, participating in ministry, receiving corrections, and growing through shared experiences.

As I studied the life of Jesus, I became increasingly aware of how much of His earthly ministry was devoted to preparing others. He certainly preached to large crowds, but He intentionally invested Himself in a smaller group of disciples. He patiently taught them, corrected their misunderstandings, encouraged them in their failures, and gradually entrusted them with greater responsibility. Jesus understood that leadership is not merely accomplishing ministry; it is preparing others to carry the mission forward.

This Truth has significantly shaped my understanding of my own calling.

Throughout my life, God has graciously placed pastors, professors, mentors, counselors, friends, and faithful believers in my path. During seasons of grief, uncertainty, and spiritual growth, He used these individuals to encourage, correct, teach, and strengthen my faith. Looking back, I realize that many of the most significant lessons God taught me came through relationships rather than through circumstances alone.

My education helped me understand why those relationships were so important. Christian Leadership is not about creating followers who depend upon a leader; it is about helping believers become mature disciples who depend upon Jesus Christ.

Kempis (1996) reminds believers, "Do not trust too much in your own opinions, but be willing to listen to those of others... it is safer to listen to advice and take it than to give it" (p. 15). His words challenged me to remain teachable throughout my doctoral studies and ministry. Effective leaders never stop learning because they recognize that wisdom comes from God and are willing to receive instruction from those He places in their lives.

As Scripture teaches, *"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."* Paul describes this model beautifully in **Ephesians 4:11–13**, where Christ gives leaders

to the church *"to equip God's people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ."* That passage has become foundational to my philosophy of ministry. My role is not to perform all the ministry myself but to help equip others so they can faithfully serve Christ according to the gifts He has given them.

This principle has directly influenced the vision God has given me for my ministry. My desire extends beyond providing biblical information through a website or publishing discipleship resources. I want to create opportunities where believers can grow together through encouragement, prayer, mentoring, accountability, and Christ-centered relationships. My prayer is that people will not merely consume biblical content but become faithful disciples who encourage and disciple others.

Yount (2010) likewise emphasizes that Christian education reaches its fullest purpose when believers move beyond acquiring biblical knowledge to experiencing genuine transformation through intentional discipleship and faithful application. That perspective continues to shape the way I think about teaching, writing, and ministry. The goal is not simply informed minds but transformed lives.

My studies in Spiritual Formation continually reinforced that transformation occurs most deeply within healthy Christian relationships. While personal Bible study and prayer remain essential, God often uses the encouragement, correction, wisdom, and accountability of fellow believers to shape us into the image of Christ.

One of the greatest lessons my education has taught me is that Ministry is never intended to be a solo endeavor. God's Kingdom advances as believers faithfully use the gifts He has entrusted to them for the good of His church. Just as Jesus equipped His disciples to continue His mission, Christian leaders today are called to equip others for works of service.

As I continue developing the ministry God has placed on my heart, I pray that I will never attempt to carry His work alone. Instead, I desire to follow the example of Jesus by encouraging, equipping, mentoring, and investing in others. My greatest joy would not be measured by what I accomplish personally but by seeing others grow into mature disciples who faithfully serve Christ and help lead others to Him.

Looking back, I can clearly see how both education and personal experience have taught me the same lesson: leadership is not about doing everything yourself. It is about helping others become who God created them to be, equipping them to serve His kingdom, and encouraging them to make disciples who will continue His work for generations to come.

7. Jesus Built a Team to Carry Out a Worldwide Vision

The seventh and final principle Wilkes (1998) identifies is that Jesus built a team to carry out a worldwide vision. Jesus understood that His mission extended far beyond His earthly ministry. Although He personally ministered to countless individuals, He

intentionally invested in a small group of disciples, preparing them to continue His work after His return to the Father. Through intentional discipleship, teaching, mentoring, correction, and empowerment, Jesus developed leaders who would carry the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus commissioned His followers:

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere..."

Acts 1:8

His vision was never limited to one location, one generation, or one leader. From the very beginning, God's plan was to multiply Disciples who would faithfully make Disciples until Christ returns.

As I have reflected on this final principle, I have come to understand that Christian Leadership is never about building something for us. It is about participating in God's eternal mission. Jesus was not establishing His own earthly kingdom; He was advancing the Kingdom of God. Likewise, every Ministry, church, organization, and believer should pursue God's purposes rather than personal success or recognition.

This principle has become one of the most transformative lessons of my educational journey. Throughout my studies in Christian Leadership, Spiritual Formation, and discipleship, I repeatedly encountered the biblical truth that God's mission is far greater than any one individual. Leadership is not about gathering followers for us but about helping people become devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

My personal experiences have helped me appreciate this truth in a unique way. Much of my ministry calling was born through seasons of suffering, healing, and God's faithfulness. For many years, I viewed those experiences primarily as part of my own testimony. As God continued to heal and mature me, however, He gradually expanded my vision beyond my personal story.

He showed me that my testimony was never meant to remain alone. The comfort He gave me was intended to comfort others. The lessons He taught me through suffering were meant to strengthen those who were walking similar paths. As Paul reminds believers,

"He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others."

2 Corinthians 1:3–4

God never wastes our pain when it is surrendered to Him.

My education helped me understand how that vision could become a reality.

Through coursework, research, ministry projects, and practical ministry experiences, I gained a deeper understanding of discipleship, leadership development, community

building, Spiritual Formation, and ministry strategy. Those studies taught me that meaningful ministry creates pathways for people to know Christ, grow in their faith, discover their gifts, and faithfully serve others.

Kempis (1996) reminds believers that true freedom and fellowship with Christ begin with surrender, writing, "My child, renounce self and you shall find Me. Give up your own self-will..." (p. 175). His words continually remind me that ministry must always begin with surrender. The vision is never ours—it belongs to God. Our calling is to lay aside our own ambitions, submit to His will, and faithfully follow wherever He leads. As Jesus prayed, *"Not my will, but yours, be done."*

One of the clearest examples of this principle has been the development of my ministry website. What began as a simple desire to share my testimony has gradually grown into something much larger.

God has given me a vision for a ministry that provides biblical resources, discipleship tools, Bible studies, encouragement, mentoring, prayer, and Christ-centered community for people who are broken, hurting, or spiritually weary.

Yet the vision extends far beyond a website.

My prayer is to help people discover their identity in Christ, experience God's healing and restoration, grow in spiritual maturity, and become faithful disciples who disciple others. Whether through writing, teaching, mentoring, speaking, or personal relationships, my desire is to point people toward Jesus Christ and equip them to fulfill the calling God has placed upon their lives.

Throughout my studies in Christian education, I also came to appreciate how intentionally Jesus taught His disciples. Yount (2010) explains that effective Christian teaching moves learners beyond simply acquiring biblical knowledge toward genuine spiritual transformation through intentional relationships, practical application, and faithful obedience. Jesus consistently modeled this approach. He taught through Scripture, personal example, meaningful questions, shared ministry experiences, correction, encouragement, and daily life together. That example continues to shape my own philosophy of ministry. **My goal is not simply to provide biblical information but to cultivate disciples whose lives increasingly reflect the character of Christ.**

Likewise, Lowe and Lowe (2021) emphasize that spiritual growth flourishes within healthy environments where Scripture, the Holy Spirit, intentional relationships, and the community of faith work together to shape believers into Christlikeness. Their work reinforced my conviction that lasting transformation rarely occurs in isolation. God ordinarily grows His people through the ministry of the church as believers encourage, challenge, and strengthen one another in love.

Paul describes this process beautifully in reminding believers that:

"we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ... He makes the whole body fit together perfectly."

Ephesians 4:15–16

That passage has become central to my ministry philosophy because it reminds me that every believer has a role in helping the Body of Christ mature.

This understanding has profoundly shaped my long-term vision. I hope to continue writing Bible studies, developing discipleship resources, mentoring believers, encouraging Spiritual Formation, building Christ-centered community, and equipping others to faithfully follow Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus invested in His disciples so they could impact the world, I desire to invest in others so they can fulfill the calling God has placed upon their lives.

Looking back, I can clearly see how God has used both education and personal experience to prepare me for this vision. My experiences gave me a testimony. My education gave me biblical understanding, theological depth, practical ministry skills, and greater wisdom. Together, they have shown me that ministry is never about what I can accomplish alone but about what God accomplishes through His people as they faithfully work together for His glory.

Jesus built a team because His vision was worldwide. As I continue following His example, my prayer is that this ministry will never become centered on one individual. Instead, I pray it will become a place where believers are encouraged, equipped, transformed, and sent into the world to make disciples who faithfully proclaim the gospel until Christ returns.

"And you have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these Truths to other trustworthy people who Will be able to pass them on to others."

2 Timothy 2:2

What My Education Has Contributed to My Ministry

When people hear my testimony, they often recognize the significant role that suffering, healing, and God's faithfulness have played in shaping my life. Those experiences are certainly an important part of my story. However, another equally important part of God's preparation has been the education He graciously provided throughout my ministry journey.

My studies in Christian Leadership, Spiritual Formation, discipleship, Christian education, and Ministry development have given me a deeper understanding of the biblical foundations upon which God is calling me to build this Ministry. Education has provided language for what God had already been accomplishing in my life through

experience. It has helped me understand Servant leadership, spiritual transformation, Christian Community, discipleship, leadership development, and the importance of equipping others to faithfully follow Jesus Christ.

More importantly, every course has continually pointed me back to Jesus.

Each class, every assigned reading, every research paper, every ministry project, and every conversation with professors and fellow students has reinforced one central truth: Christian Leadership begins with following Christ. Before God calls us to lead others, He calls us to know Him, abide in Him, and be transformed into the likeness of His Son. Jesus taught this principle clearly when He said,

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, Will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing"

John 15:5

This verse has become foundational to my understanding of ministry. Lasting fruit is never produced through education alone, personal ability, or ministry experience. It is produced as we remain faithfully connected to Christ and allow His Spirit to transform our lives.

Throughout my doctoral studies, I came to appreciate that education is not merely about acquiring knowledge but about becoming the kind of person God can use. Wilkes (1998) taught me what servant leadership looks like. Lowe and Lowe (2021) deepened my understanding of spiritual formation within the body of Christ. Yount (2010) reminded me that effective teaching seeks life transformation rather than the simple transfer of information. Wilhoit (2008) continually emphasized that spiritual formation involves becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ within the life of the church. Together, these authors reinforced what Scripture had already begun teaching me through the work of the Holy Spirit.

My education has not replaced my testimony; it has strengthened it. My experiences taught me dependence upon God. My education helped me understand those experiences through the lens of Scripture and faithful Christian scholarship. Together they have deepened my conviction that ministry is never about building a name for us but about glorifying Christ and helping others become mature disciples. Looking back, I now recognize that God was using both the classroom and the circumstances of life as instruments of His grace. One taught me through experience. The other helped me understand what He was doing. Both were necessary. Both were gifts.

As I continue following God's calling, I pray that I will never separate knowledge from obedience or education from Spiritual Formation. Instead, I desire to continually grow in wisdom, humility, and Christlikeness so that everything I write, teach, and do reflects the character of Jesus Christ.

As Paul encouraged Timothy,

"Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive His approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of Truth."

2 Timothy 2:15

That remains my prayer as I continue serving Christ through the Ministry He has entrusted to me.



Conclusion

As I reflect on these seven principles of servant leadership, I see a beautiful picture of God's faithfulness throughout every season of my life. Long before I understood these principles academically, God was patiently teaching them through the experiences He allowed into my life. My doctoral education then provided the biblical and theological framework that helped me recognize His hand at work in every circumstance.

Through both education and personal experience, God has been teaching me to lead as Jesus led — with humility, obedience, compassion, servant-hearted love, unwavering trust, intentional discipleship, and a vision centered on the advancement of His kingdom. My life experiences taught me dependence upon God, while my education deepened my understanding of His truth. Each course added another piece to that understanding—from servant leadership and Christian education to spiritual formation and discipleship—revealing that God develops His people through His Word, His Spirit, the community of faith, and faithful obedience. Together, they have shown me that Christian leadership is not about status, recognition, influence, or personal achievement. It is about faithfully following Jesus Christ and helping others do the same.

Kempis (1996) wrote, "Be humble and peaceful, and Jesus will be with you" (p. 76). Those words summarize much of what I have learned throughout this journey. The closer I draw to Christ, the more I realize that leadership is not about becoming greater but about becoming more like Him.

The apostle Paul expressed this same desire when he wrote,

"Dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end..."

Philippians 3:13–14

Those words reflect the desire of my own heart. I have not arrived, nor do I believe that my education has completed God's work in my life. Instead, this journey has reminded me that spiritual growth is a lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus Christ. Every season of life, every trial, every classroom, every relationship, and every opportunity to serve has been another step in God's gracious work of shaping me into the servant He has called me to be.

As I continue developing the ministry God has entrusted to me, my prayer is that every Bible study, every resource, every conversation, every opportunity to teach, and every act of service will faithfully reflect the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. May everything, I do point people beyond myself to the Savior who alone brings hope, healing, truth, and lasting transformation.

My desire is not simply to teach God's Word but to live it. I want to encourage others to know Christ more deeply, trust Him more fully, grow in spiritual maturity, and faithfully disciple others for His glory. If anything in my life or ministry bears lasting fruit, it will be because of God's grace working through an imperfect servant who continues to learn, surrender, and follow wherever He leads.

Looking back, I can now see that God has used both the classroom and the experiences of life to prepare me for His purposes. My experiences taught me dependence upon Him, while my education deepened my understanding of His truth. Together, they have strengthened my faith, clarified my calling, and equipped me to serve His people with greater wisdom, compassion, and humility.

I pray that my life will continually reflect the words of **John the Baptist**:

"He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less."

John 3:30

Those words beautifully summarize what servant leadership is about. It is not about building our own name or pursuing personal success.

It is about faithfully following Jesus Christ, pointing others to Him, and giving Him all the glory for every life He chooses to touch through our service.



Closing Scripture

"He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less."

John 3:30



A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Heavenly Father,

With a grateful heart, I thank You for Your unfailing love, amazing grace, and faithful hand upon every season of my life. Looking back, I can clearly see that You were present in every joy, every trial, every disappointment, and every victory. Even when I could not understand what You were doing, You were patiently shaping me into the Servant, You created me to be.

Thank You for using both my life experiences and my education to deepen my faith, strengthen my calling, and prepare me for the Ministry You have entrusted to me.

Thank You for every lesson learned, every challenge overcome, every professor who faithfully taught Your Truth, every author whose writings pointed me closer to Christ, every mentor who encouraged me, and every brother and sister in Christ who walked beside me throughout this journey. Most of all, thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, the perfect example of humility, obedience, compassion, and Servant leadership. **Thank You** for His sacrifice on the Cross, His victorious resurrection, and the gift of eternal life made possible through Him alone.

Lord, I recognize that every ability, opportunity, and blessing I have comes from Your gracious hand. Apart from You I can do nothing, but through You all things are possible according to Your perfect Will. Continue to humble me, teach me, and transform me so that my life will reflect the character of Jesus Christ. May every Bible study I write that every resource I create, every conversation I have, every person I encourage, and every opportunity to serve bring honor and glory to Your name alone. Protect my heart from pride, keep me faithful to Your Word, and help me never lose sight of the privilege of serving You. **Thank You** for allowing me to be part of Your Kingdom work. May I remain faithful until the day I stand before You.

In the precious name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior,

Amen.



A Prayer for the Reader

Heavenly Father,

thank You for every person who has taken the time to read these pages. You know each heart, every burden, unanswered question, joy, and struggle they carry, and nothing about their life is hidden from You. I pray that through this paper they have been drawn not to me, but to Jesus Christ, and that His perfect example of servant leadership will encourage them to follow Him faithfully. Strengthen the weary, heal the hurting, remind the forgotten that they are deeply loved, and guide those seeking direction. Help each reader discover their identity in Christ and continue transforming them through Your Word, the Holy Spirit, and the fellowship of Your people. Raise up faithful disciples who serve with Christlike love, proclaim the Gospel boldly, and live as testimonies of Your grace, mercy, and transforming power. Help each of us become more like Jesus every day until we see Him face to face. We ask these things in the mighty and precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen.

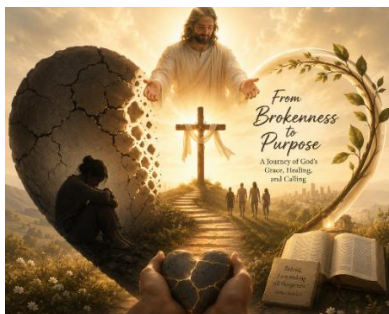
Prayerfully prepared by

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Servant of God

"Pointing people to the hope, healing, and transformation found in Jesus Christ."



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