

## Servant leadership

Just before Jesus began his ministry, he was led into the desert, where he took time to reflect and consider his role. He was tempted to abuse his great power as a leader, but chose instead to become a model of servant leadership.

Jesus never looked for a comfortable home or wealth. He gave his life to serving others, through his teaching, healing and his love for the people he met. Although the disciples made a lot of mistakes and often disappointed him, he continued to encourage, support and challenge them. His example of servant leadership should inspire, challenge and remain a goal for all who are in positions of responsibility.

Servant leadership puts the needs of others first and listens to their views. Some groups within the church, such as the elderly, those with disabilities, women or children, may have few opportunities to share their needs and views. Their views, opinions and contributions to the life of the church need to be valued. In this way, decision-making can be shared, owned and followed by all church members.

### Discussion



- How can we follow the example of Jesus in serving others? Why can this be particularly difficult to do in leadership roles?
- Read John 13:1-17 which describes the example of leadership that Jesus provides.
  - o What model of leadership does Jesus show here?
  - o How would we feel if we were one of the disciples at that meal?
  - o What should our response be to Jesus' action?
  - o What characteristics of leadership does Jesus show here?
  - o Ask people to physically wash each other's feet. Discuss how this felt for the person washing the feet. Discuss how this felt for the people whose feet were washed. What does it teach us about leadership?
- Leadership is never easy. Do we support and pray for our leaders as much as we should? In what other ways can we help and encourage our leaders?
- Read 1 Corinthians 3:18-20. In many situations it can be very hard for leaders or those in authority to 'look foolish' or let others take charge. How does Jesus' example of washing the disciples' feet challenge our views on leadership?

Source: *PILLARS Guide: Mobilising the church*, Tearfund 2004, pages 20-21

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