

Servant or Survivor

by Jeremy Patterson and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

“But whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” Mark 10:44.

FAITH STORY:

Mark 10:35-45

FAITH FOCUS:

How many times have we wanted to run the show? The world we live in is full of ego-maniacs striving to be the biggest and the best. Common sense would say that the one who yells the loudest is the one that is going to be heard above the crowd. The business world promises that those who climb the ladder at all costs will reap the most benefits. But Jesus does something very counter-cultural when he makes his statement that “whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” Sometimes we forget that the way to be a Christian leader is not with force and coercion, but with unselfish sacrificial love.

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Tape a session of the TV show “Survivor” and prepare to share it with the class.
- 2 Arrange for a “staged discussion” between several adult or youth leaders of the class. This discussion would be taking place when students arrive, and students would be able to overhear what is going on. Leaders would be discussing and “mildly arguing” over who would provide leadership for the session and how that would be done. If you want to take this another step further, leaders can ask class members as they arrive who they would like to lead the session and what they would like to do. (If you choose to do this and want to talk to Carol about how this might work, feel free to email her at carold@mennoniteusa.org or call her at 620-367-8432.) One topic for a heated discussion could be whether or not to show the “Survivor” episode.

Pro’s—it will illustrate the point being made in the lesson, some youth probably view it already, it is a way to use current media to talk about a Biblical theme, etc.

Con’s—it has no redeeming values, skimpy clothing, etc.

- 3 Bibles for every student

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS

The discussion between leaders is going on as students come in. Carry it on for a few minutes, then stop. Ask class members what they noticed about what was going on. What are their thoughts about what was happening between their leaders? Were they aware that it was faked? What gave it away? If not, how did it feel to have the leaders disagreeing?

CONNECT WITH THE STORIES

1 Read Mark 10:35-45.

Discuss:

- What is happening in this passage? What do James and John want?
- How do you think Jesus felt when he heard them ask that?
- Why were the other disciples angry at James and John?
- Why do you think Jesus takes this different approach to being great? Does it really work?
- Does Jesus mean to say that being a leader or wanting to be a great, well respected person is a bad thing? Defend your answer with reasons.

2 Watch the episode of Survivor. Before watching, tell students to watch for examples of how the people are striving to be leaders. After watching it, discuss:

- What tactics were people using to be leaders?
- Were any of them following Christ's instructions about being a servant?
- How do you think you would act if you were on Survivor? What would be your tactics?

RESPOND

Read Philippians 2:1-11.

Say something like this, in your own words:

This issue of servant leadership really is a paradox. How does one lead and at the same time, as both Paul and Jesus would say, be a slave to others? This concept is not an easy one to comprehend.

The world most of us live in is one in which the meanest and most tenacious persons usually end up on top, which may not be the right thing, but it seems like that's usually the reality. Jesus' teachings in Mark and Paul's teachings in Philippians go so far as to say that we are to be slaves to others in our attempts to be "exalted". Their choice of wording is making a statement. The word slave signifies that as Christians we are bound to this concept of serving others. If we ourselves have ambitions of being respectable successful people we must remember the needs of others.

Neither Paul nor Jesus say specifically that we should never have ambitions of becoming a CEO of an international company or the manager of our local grocery store. The one thing they do say is that we can't forget others in the process.

When we live in community, there are going to be leaders. Teachers, students, parents, children, business executives, pastors, farmers—everyone has the opportunity to be a leader in some aspect. Good leaders remember the interests and needs of those around them. Leaders who follow Jesus follow his example of having a servant heart.

Discuss:

- What does it mean to have a servant heart in today's world? In your school? Family?
- Do you know examples of people who have a servant heart?
- What would you need to change in your life in order to have a servant heart?

Closing: Sing or read together the song "Will you let me be your servant"— #307 in *Hymnal, a Worship Book*