

Two Ways to Lead

Pastor Chad Gilligan • November 30, 2025

1. “What’s in it for me?” — The Human Question: Matthew 20:20–23; Matthew 19:28

Jesus confronts the natural human desire for status and self-advancement. James and John (through their mother) ask to sit in places of honor, but Jesus reframes greatness through surrender and trust.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think the desire for recognition or status is so natural for us?
- Where do you see the “What’s in it for me?” mindset show up in your daily life, work, or relationships?
- Jesus asks, “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” What does embracing sacrifice look like for followers of Jesus today?
- How does trusting the Father’s plan change the way you think about position, opportunity, or influence?

Follow-Up Prompt

Where is Jesus asking you to trust the Father’s timing or placement rather than seeking your own promotion?

2. Everyone Leads Somewhere: Matthew 20:24; Matthew 18:1

The disciples’ frustration reveals that all of them cared about position. Leadership isn’t limited to titles - everyone influences someone.

Discussion Questions

- Who are the people you influence in your everyday life, even without realizing it?
- What does it mean that “everyone leads somewhere in some way”?
- How might your leadership look different if you viewed every interaction as stewardship from God?

Follow-Up Prompt

What is one area where you can intentionally lead with Christlike character this week?

3. The Way of the World — “I Put Me First”: Matthew 20:25

Worldly leadership prioritizes self: power, control, and personal benefit.

Discussion Questions

- Where do you see worldly leadership modeled in culture today?
- How does self-focused leadership impact families, workplaces, or ministries?
- In what subtle ways are we tempted to adopt the world’s approach to leading?

Follow-Up Prompt

Identify one area where “I put me first” thinking is shaping your leadership and ask God to realign your heart.

4. The Way of Jesus — “I Put You First”: Matthew 20:26–28; Matthew 23:11–12

Greatness in the kingdom comes through servanthood, humility, and self-giving love.

Discussion Questions

- Why is humility so central to kingdom leadership?
- James 3:14–16 warns about jealousy and selfish ambition. How do these attitudes erode community or ministry?
- What does it practically look like to serve like Jesus in your relationships, workplace, or church?
- How does Philippians 2:3–5 challenge your normal approach to leadership or influence?

Follow-Up Prompt

Where can you choose a servant posture this week when it would be easier to take the position of advantage?

5. We Serve with Eternity in Mind: Matthew 19:27–30

Jesus reassures His followers that sacrificial service is never wasted. God sees and rewards faithfulness.

Discussion Questions

- How does keeping eternity in focus change the way you endure hard seasons?
- When have you seen God take care of you in ways that reinforced trust in His leadership?
- Why is it important to remember that greatness in God's kingdom often looks opposite of worldly success?

Follow-Up Prompt

Where do you need to remember that Jesus will take care of you as you serve?

6. We Serve for Others Because Jesus Served Us First: Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 4:10; Matthew 20:17–19

Jesus gave His life as a ransom—our service flows from His sacrifice. God gives spiritual gifts to build up others.

Discussion Questions

- How does remembering Jesus' sacrifice reshape your motivations for serving?
- In what ways has someone's service made your life better?
- According to 1 Peter 4:10, how are spiritual gifts connected to serving others?
- Where might God be calling you to use your gifts more intentionally?

Follow-Up Prompt

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one person you can serve this week in a meaningful, sacrificial way.

Key Takeaways

- Greatness in the kingdom is rooted in service, not status.
- Leadership begins with influence, not titles - everyone leads.

- Worldly leadership seeks self-advancement; Jesus-style leadership puts others first.
- Humility is essential for Christlike leadership.
- Jesus sees every sacrifice and will take care of His followers.
- We serve others because Jesus first served and sacrificed for us.
- God equips us with gifts so we can build up others.

Reflection

Where is Jesus inviting you to shift your leadership from self-focused to others-focused? What would change if you approached every relationship, role, and responsibility with a servant heart like Christ?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the example of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve. Shape my heart to lead like Him—with humility, love, and a willingness to put others first. Help me trust Your timing, Your placement, and Your care. Use my gifts to build up those around me, and teach me to lead with eternity in mind. Make me a servant leader who reflects the heart of Christ. Amen.