

Servant Leadership in Burmese

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Submitted to the faculty of Western Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Ministry

Holland, Michigan
2022

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to thank God for His love and grace in my life. I know that without God, I cannot do or live by His power. I am able to do the work He has gifted me to do in this project and ministry only because of him.

Secondly, I am highly honored to acknowledge my family who have lived and worked together over 11 years. First I mention my wife Lily, and my daughter Elizabeth, and then my two sons Jonathan Bik and David Bik. They truly support this journey of doing my Doctor of Ministry program at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. I know that the sacrifice you have made has been greater than anything else which means great blessings for me. Thank you again for the love and support you have provided during the challenge of these years. I truly know that I would not be able to do all this if I did not have you by my side. I love you dearly and am very grateful for you. You are so precious. And also I give thanks to my family back home in Burma; without their prayer support and love I wouldn't be able to do this.

And also I want to acknowledge my congregation: Chin Mission Baptist Church in Michigan. All your prayer support and love was heard by God; everything you did for me is wonderful. Without your love and prayer support I am nothing; because of your prayer support I accomplished the great success of my life.

Thirdly, I thank my doctoral cohort group and Professor Rev.Dr.Kyle Small. This is a blessed cohort group of learning coming together with open hearts and minds. The

blessings of fellowship and gathering and studying together means we are not just friends, but I feel that we are friends for the journey of life.

Fourthly, God called us as a family and friends to walk together for the ministry and for the great gift of salvation for the world. The Doctor of Ministry program has helped to bring to sharp focus to the need for salvation, and then meeting the needs to bring people into Christ. How blessed is the journey of working on this together for the glory of God. Amen!

I give thanks to God for being able to learn His word and to honor him with daily prayer and praise in my life. I give my deepest heartfelt love to God. To God alone be the glory. Amen. Hallelujah!

Abstract

The main purpose of this thesis is to provide an overview of leadership in the Burmese culture, to describe how it has changed in the last few decades, to recommend what is now needed to reform it and bring it back to health in society and, particularly, in the church. In a church steeped in a culture led by dictators for generations, the pastor can quickly become an authoritarian figure. However, in light of the gospel, all who follow Jesus ought to become servants. This project asserts and tests that servant leadership is a key factor between Burmese Christians and congregations in the USA as they work to understand the challenges of immigrant life.

This project is a case study that will look at the current situation in Burma through the eyes of Christian immigrants to the USA. The aim is to focus on leadership for Burmese immigrant congregations to understand the changes that have happened, to use biblical theology to understand that leadership, how it has changed, and how it must keep changing in a healthier direction.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: The Shape of Leadership in Burmese History and Culture	1
Introduction.....	1
Basic Overview of Myanmar	1
Political Life and Government Leadership.....	6
How the History of the People Shaped Ideas about Leadership.....	10
How and Why the Past Years Have Changed the Leadership in the Country	13
Who is the Leader in Burma Now?.....	15
The People’s Response to the Military Coup	16
Thinking, Beliefs and Lifestyle for Burmese Christians in West Michigan.....	16
Chapter 2: How Burmese Servant Leaders Help Each Other	19
Introduction.....	19
The Challenges Needing Servant Leaders with and for Burmese Refugees	21
What Does Servant Leadership Look Like.....	26
Obedience	28
Humility	28
Jesus, Servant and Leader	29
The Importance of Servant Leadership - For the People and for the Work.....	30

Why Is Servant Leadership Necessary for People Who Follow Jesus?.....	32
The Main Goal of the Servant Leader.....	36
Why Burmese Refugee Leadership in West Michigan Must Show Servant Leadership	38
Chapter 3: What Is Servant Leadership	44
Introduction.....	44
Servant Leadership.....	44
Servant Leadership is a Commitment to Put Others First to Help Build Loving Relationships.....	47
Servant Leadership in a Biblical Context	49
Confessing and Listening to God: Nehemiah	50
Leading and Advocating for Those Who Oppose You: Moses in Numbers 12	52
Joshua: The Leader Called by God.....	54
Jesus Servant Leadership Expressed Love Through Sacrificial Life.....	55
Characteristics of Servant Leadership	58
Listening	59
Empathy	61
Healing.....	63
Awareness	64

Conceptualization	65
Foresight	68
Stewardship.....	70
Servant Leadership Leading People Development.	72
Servant Leadership for Burmese Pastors	74
Chapter 4: A Boy in Burma	76
Introduction.....	76
Early Life in Burma	76
Parents.....	77
Learning Discipline Through National Sports.....	81
Learning Faith from My Pastor.....	82
Government.....	82
Young Adult in India	83
Refugee Status	84
I Attend Seminary in India.....	85
Becoming Pastor and Teacher	86
How Did I Respond?.....	90
Settling in the USA and Into a Brand New Culture.....	91
Marriage and Family.....	92

The Vacation and The Job	93
Servant Leading	94
Coming to West Michigan	98
Servant Leadership in West Michigan During Pandemic.....	100
Servant Leadership Style Change In West Michigan.	102
Chapter 5: Transformational Servant Leadership Development	108
Introduction.....	108
What Transformation Looks Like.....	108
Who is transformed?	109
Transformational change	110
Commitment to Active Listening.....	111
Willingness to Accept Responsibility.....	112
Who Is Being Transformed?.....	113
Jesus’ Transformational Servant Leadership	113
Jesus Makes Disciples.....	116
Calling to Be Disciples	116
Inspirational Motivational Servant leadership	119
Transformational Leaders Build Relationships Among Burmese Refugees	120
Transformational Servant Leadership In Burmese Culture	123

Paul's Leadership, For Example	127
Conclusion	132
Bibliography	135

Chapter One: The Shape of Leadership in Burmese History and Culture

Introduction

The history of Burma (now Myanmar) is complicated and rooted in violence. Yet the Burmese people long for peace. Like so many nations, Burma has taken root out of a history of colonialism, and this has caused them many complications. Yet Christianity found a foothold in Burma, as Dennis S. Maung and Salai Bawi Lian note. Saw Myant Min, Michael Aung Thwin, and Kathleen Kuiper review the nature of Burma's origins and economy. Thwin and others then trace Myanmar's descent into violence and unrest as the military government, formed in 1962 (and reformed in 1988), clings to power. This has placed tremendous pressures on the various people groups of Myanmar, including the author's people of Chinland.

Basic Overview of Myanmar

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is in Southeast Asia and has a population of around 52 million people. Burma's name was officially changed to Myanmar by the military government. The government decided to replace the English name "Burma" with Myanmar. Tiffany Teng writes, "In 1989, the ruling military government changed the name from Burma to Myanmar after thousands were killed in an uprising."¹ This paper will favor the name Burma for reasons of my historical and emotional connections to that

¹ Tiffany Teng, "Burma v Myanmar: Why the Country Is Known by Two Names," Culture Trip.com, July 14, 2017, <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/myanmar/articles/burma-v-myanmar-why-the-country-is-known-by-two-names/>.

term. However, I will use the names Burma and Myanmar interchangeably. Saw Myat Yin writes, “Prior to this, the government had been a socialist government with a one-party system of government. The Burma socialist programmed party had based its policies on the Burmese way to socialism, a mixture of socialism and Buddhism, declared on April 30, 1962.”² Yin notes that the country adopted a new constitution in 1974. To mark this occasion, a new national flag and a new seal were created.

Christianity was introduced by Protestant American Baptist missionaries in the early nineteenth century, by Adoniram and Ann Judson who arrived in Rangoon from the United States. Dennis S. Maung writes, “The beginning of Christianity in Chin State, Myanmar is rooted upon the labor of Rev. and Mrs. Arthur E. Carson. Subsequently the efforts of the succeeding Missionaries in Chin State were also the seeds and the soil for the sprout of the flowers and the fruits of spiritual life in Chin State.”³ The Myanmar Christian Church in Burma has increased and grown in many places. Adoniram Judson translated the Bible from English to Burmese which helped to spread the gospel in Myanmar. Psalm 96:3 says, “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.” But there were many issues and challenges to Christianity in Burma, namely that the Myanmar government is ruled by the military and is opposed to Christianity.

I belong to Chin State which is full of beautiful mountains and hills. The Chin State is majority Christian and the Christians there love to worship together. At present

² San Myant Yin, *Cultures of the World: Burma* (New York: Marshall Cavendish. 1990), 29.

³ Dennis S. Maung, “A Brief History of Christianity in Chin State,” Melbourne Chin Church, <https://melbournechinchurch.com.au/christianity-in-chin-state/>.

an estimated 90 percent of Chins in Chin State are Christians. Chin State has the largest concentration of Christians in the whole of Burma in terms of percentage. Salai Bawi Lian, executive director of the Chin human rights organization, writes, “In 1899, American Baptist Missionary Rev. Arthur Carson and his wife from American Baptist Mission came to Chin land, currently Chin State in Burma, and founded a mission station at Haka the present capital town of Chin State. They brought the gospel and Christianity to the Chin people.”⁴ It was Carson who planted the seed of the gospel in my region of Burma. In Chin State the majority religion is Christian because Rev. Arthur E. Carson and his wife brought the gospel. These Christian believers developed a very strong spiritual cultural identity, which created strong unity and love among them. Christian faith grew and people heard the gospel in Chin State. Matthew 24:14 says, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Now Chin State is spreading churches and preaching the gospel. Christians enjoy worshiping God and carrying the gospel. People have fellowship and good relationships. Before Chin State became Christian, our forefathers worshiped a universal world. Paul Za Nei Bil writes, “Our forefather in Chin people worships demons, trees, stones, rivers and big mountain.”⁵

Now the gospel changes people's hearts and they turn to God and worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 45:22 says, “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth;

⁴ Jeffrey Hays, “The Chin People,” Facts and Details, last modified August 2020, https://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Myanmar/sub5_5d/entry-3048.html#chapter-0.

⁵ Paul Za Nei Bill, *Mongolia-Chin: Origin of the Chins* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Publish E-print Solutions Sdn Bhd., 2016), 19.

for I am God, and there is no other.” But the Burmese government has total authority in society and holds tight rule over the nation, which is a hardship in both politics and religion. The Burmese brand of Buddhism tends to be anti-Christian, especially in the capital Yangon. The most anti-Christian states are Yangon and Mandalay.

Basic Economy: The economy is dominated by agriculture. In Burma, rice is the main food and everyone eats rice daily. Other food items include beans, soup, vegetables, chili, fish, meat, potatoes, and fruits. Kathleen Kuiper writes, “Agriculture is the basis of the Chin economy; land is cultivated in rotation, consecutive cultivation for several years being followed by reversion to forest. Rice, millet, and corn (maize) are the main crops.”⁶

Rice is the most important part of the diet but it is difficult to produce in some places because it is hilly; however in many places it is flat with good soil. Most households have their own farm, and every day they go to work on their farms. They produce rice, beans and corn. On their farms, rice is planted during summer and harvested in autumn between October and November. Burma’s economy is based on farms and growing rice. Every morning, Burmese take meat and every evening meal is rice. Rice is cooked in a pot called a rice cooker. After the rice is cooked well the family will almost always eat together.

In Burma the people work Monday through Saturday. Most people do not have transportation to go to their farms, so they walk. Saw Myant Yin writes, “The main areas for rice growing are the Irrawaddy, Delta, the coastal regions of Arakan and Tenasserim

⁶ Kathleen Kuiper, ed., “Chin People,” Encyclopedia Britannica Online, accessed May 10, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chin-people>.

and the Sittang valley. The hill people cultivate many kinds of crops needed for their own consumption and for sale on a small scale because the terrain makes agriculture possible only on a limited scale.”⁷ They work very hard to get enough food from the farm to sustain their families.

Other occupations include trading, manufacturing, industries and service. Saw Myan Yin writes, “The first modern factories in Burma, set up during the reign of the last two kings in the 19th century, processed glass, steel and mint. During the British colonial period many industries such as rice is milling and petroleum refining flourished but these were destroyed during the Second World War.”⁸ After the war, in 1948, Burma established many private entrepreneurships, as well as government-run businesses. Private entrepreneurs were useful and active in textile, food, industries, and were involved in pharmaceuticals and the production of cotton, jute, and steel milling.

To make farmland for family farms, first they cut trees between the months of July and December; then after the trees become dry, they set fires and burn areas of forest to make fields to plant the seeds. After some time, they started cleaning and cultivating, and then planted the rice or bean seeds. This is a one-year cycle and then they move to a new place to make more farmland.

⁷ Yin, *Cultures of the World: Burma*, 33.

⁸ Yin, *Cultures of the World: Burma* 35.

Political Life and Government Leadership

Michael Aung Thwin writes, “In 1962 General Ne Win, as one of the country’s leaders in his own right as well as Aung San torchbearer, was not about to see the Union helped to simply unravel, and so staged the coup.”⁹

In the middle of all this, Christian servant leadership is important to see the right decisions that will help people on the right path. Jesus loves the world and gives his life for ransom; that sacrifice is really important for a Christian leadership perspective. Christian servant leadership is not only about receiving personal help, but this includes helping other people. Colossians 3:23 says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”

Michael W. Charney writes, “It brought an end to democratic institutions and civil liberties. Nationalization of the economy and the forced sales by farmers of produce to the government removed private incentives and ruined the economy, leading to mass protests in the rainy season of 1988.”¹⁰ The coup happened when military leader Ne Win took control over the country in 1962. The people started protesting the dictatorship and there was much unrest. Since then, the government has been ruled by military authority.

Since 1962, power has been misused; the result is conflict among different ethnic groups. The people do not have freedom of choice because the government rules with sole authority. The government leadership has failed; the leadership is a dictator

⁹ Michael Aung Thwin, *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times: Traditions and Transformation* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2012), 246.

¹⁰ Michael W. Charney, “Myanmar Coup: How the Military Has Held onto Power for 60 Years,” *The Conversation.com*, February 3, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/myanmar-coup-how-the-military-has-held-onto-power-for-60-years-154526>.

supported by the regime's army. People are arrested and sent to jail without trial; there are no human rights due to the military's powerful oppression. The government's leadership seems to struggle between the civil rights of the people and their power as government leaders. The people lost freedom and standing in their own country. Military activity dominates almost everything including the economy so there is economic poverty for most people. The military creates conflict within the country and so there is no peace. "When good people run things, everyone is glad, but when the ruler is bad, everyone groans." (Proverbs 29:2).

Michael Aung Thwin writes:

It all started on March 12, 1988, at a local tea shop when a fight broke out between a group of university students and local youths over whether modern rock or traditional Burmese music was to be played on a radio. The tea shop was located near the Yangon Institute of Technology where tensions already existed between town and gown communities. In this incident a student was injured.¹¹

The police started using guns and shooting people. The police arrested many people and sent them to jail. While the people started demonstrating and protesting about that, the police kept killing and shooting the people. Students from other parts of the city began joining the protests and it spread; it caused more riots in city after city. The people became more and more afraid because of more and more shootings and police killings, which made the situation worse and worse. In 1962, under the U Ne Win dictator, the people suffered again. Another uprising happened in 1988 and people were dying again and being arrested. Because of the military control people have no human right, which means no more freedom and no peace.

¹¹ Thwin. *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times*, 256.

This recent violent history has strong and lasting effects, like the extreme hold on power by the military *junta*. Michael Aung Thwin writes, “The violence in Yangon spread to other urban areas of the country that have been affected by similar factors. Adding to the growing instability was the perception that the country’s leadership was also divided on a course of action.”¹²

Schools: In Burma, children start school when they turn five years old. There are primary schools, middle schools, as well as high schools and colleges. The school and tuition fees are paid by parents. If a parent cannot pay or support them, the children need to stop going to school. That is a root cause of very weak child education. The parents are too poor to help the children attend school; also, there is no bus service. Some children go to school long distances because some villages have no school. The political unrest has prevented regular schooling.

Religion: Religious beliefs in Burma include a variety of Buddhists, Christian, Muslim and Hindu. The majority religion is Buddhist—almost 90 percent. Many ethnic groups follow the Buddhists' worship and leadership. Robert Coles writes, “Nearly 90% of the country is Buddhist, and most are members of the majority ethnic community known as Burman’s. Ethnic minorities—such as the Chin, Kachin, Karin, and Rohingya—include significant populations of Christians and Muslims.”¹³

Buddhist worship and leadership focuses on peace and kindness to others. Buddhist cultural belief is that meditating will make people free from desire and stress

¹² Thwin, *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times*, 257.

¹³ Robert Coles, “Conflict in Myanmar Buddhism Case Study-Violence & Peace 2018,” Harvard Divinity School, <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/religion-context/case-studies/violence-peace/conflict-myanmar>.

and worldly pressure. Benjamin Elisha Sawe writes, “Buddhism teaches love and kindness for one another and advocates for avoiding the extremes while stressing on good deeds. Buddhism believes in reincarnation and considers that the present actions will affect future life after death.”¹⁴ This has done little to prevent violence and oppression, however. What is needed is real leadership based on the values of the gospel.

Christian servant leaders are important for seekers; they help bring people to Christ. Servant leadership helps people and teaches God’s love and goodness. A servant leadership role is one kind of help that shows the people the right path to a new life in Christ. Christian servant leaders lead people to Christ and help them live in the shining of God’s glory. Hope Brankerhoff writes, “As a leader, a Christian leader, it is our responsibility to serve others. We are called to love others by putting others before ourselves. Jesus showed people love and lived a life of serving and helping others.”¹⁵

The dictatorship is an amazing contrast to servant leadership; servant leaders and the government rulers are totally different from each other. Dictators want everyone to give high value to them and they are controlling and manipulative. Dictators want to use power to hold down other people. They want to use their authority to make people afraid and treat others selfishly. Such an authoritarian form of government focuses on blaming others for their own failure. They will demand respect from other people instead of earning it. Dictators love ruling and using power. Thank Myint-U writes, “Ne Win also

¹⁴ Benjamin Elisha Sawe, “Religious Beliefs in Myanmar (Burma),” World Atlas, April 25, 2017, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/religious-beliefs-in-myanmar-burma.html>.

¹⁵ Hope Brakenhoff, “Strive to Be a Servant Leader,” Light and Life Magazine, January 2018, <https://lightandlifemagazine.com/strive-to-be-a-servant-leader/>.

ruined Burmese education. Whatever the evils of colonialism, the British had left behind Rangoon one of the best universities in Asia, as well as dozens of excellent English-language schools.”¹⁶

Servant leaders give respect to other people. Servant leader’s guide and love people they lead and serve. They will be accountable and also help others be accountable. They love people and are eager to help grow the work of ministry. They give respect to the group and they are humble before God and other people. Christian servant leaders encourage people and they are peace makers. First Thessalonians 5:12-13, says, “Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.”

How the History of the People Shaped Ideas about Leadership

In Chin land before the coup, the people enjoyed serenity and peace. The land of Chin was good and beautiful. The people had good relationships because the leadership led democratically. My Chin land was very safe and the people loved the land where they lived. Chin land is full of hills and mountains. The people enjoyed the community because there was no partiality in the Chin State. People helped each other and socialized with each other. In Chin land, when everyone went to work, they did not need to lock their doors because it was very safe. Christian servant leaders who lead in love fit the culture because joy and relationship are historically part of the culture of the group.

¹⁶ Thant Myint-U, *The Hidden History of Burma* (W.W. Norton & Company, Independent Publishers, 1923), 33.

Hebrews 13:16 says, “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

People built their houses by cutting big trees and sawing the wood to build the house and came together to help one another. There was no cost because they did not need to pay for all the employees. The cultural understanding was that everyone would help each other. There was unity among the Chin people, partly due to their willingness to help each other. One important thing I remember is that the government provided food pantries. We went to the food store and everyone got free food, rice, milk, and coffee. That is why Burma had freedom and peace. But, slowly, the military *junta* took over authority and there is no more peace, and now people are scattered all over the world. The strong sense of community is destroyed.

Today Burma needs servant leadership because the dictatorship is abusing power and abusing freedom in the country. Servant leadership is totally different from dictatorship. Servant leaders love to help and see when people need it; the result is that people enjoy a peaceful community. Servant leaders seek this joy of God which means bringing people into Christ and working for unity among the others. Servant leaders seek to show the love that casts out fear.

Jesus models and teaches servant leadership and calls all people to come together with each other and him. Jesus' love does not reject anyone but it is a saving love. Christian servant leaders' love and unity-building brings people together in one accord. There is love and joy and peace in the group. It is not like Burma's dictators who cause fear and distrust and the result is separation of people; real servant leadership unifies.

Burma's Need: The essential need now is to know the one creator of the universe Jesus Christ, who is peace and love. Jesus loves us humans and wants us to be the family of God. We can become unified by the grace of God, we can make Burma better. For example, one big need is for the transformation of favoritism toward certain ethnic groups. Burma needs Jesus' model of servant leadership with love for everyone and no favorites. If the people will believe in and follow Jesus, the corruption in Burma can be cleaned up, because Jesus Christ can bring joy and peace to the country. Therefore, what is needed to develop good leadership is based on the concepts of service, truth, and love in leadership. True servant leadership is to be found in Jesus Christ only; he came to serve not to be served and to give his life.

Culture: Myanmar's culture was heavily influenced by Buddhism, because the majority culture is Buddhism. A few years ago, most men wore the clothing of the Longyi, which is also one of the cultures in Burma; it is like wearing jeans and pants. Another cultural value is that eye contact is not highly valued. When people talk or communicate with one another it is not important to look into the other's eye. Even though they do not look at each other when talking, they still respect each other. Culture change happens when people learn and experience a new culture. For example, in the U.S., Burmese immigrants learn different cultures and experience it.

Burmese families typically have many children. People want large families. Individuals choose their own partners, but many marriages are arranged by parents, which mean some are love marriages but other marriages are just arranged by the parents. Saw Myat Yin writes, "Arranged marriages are still found among Burmese. Parents hope

for a person with roughly the same ethnic background, economic status and education for their child.”¹⁷ The father is the head in the family and responsible to provide for the family; so he works a job and the wife manages the household. Saw Myant Yin writes:

Families’ ties are strong among Burmese. Buddhist tenets of duties and responsibilities of parents and children are still closely followed. Parents expect obedience and children have a duty to look after parents in their old age. The act of publicly disowning a child because of an unapproved marriage is not uncommon.”¹⁸

Sometimes Burmese families including grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and children live together in one house. The families are greatly supportive of their relatives. Often these networks include close friends; even close neighbors are included in care networks.

How and Why the Past Years Have Changed the Leadership in the Country

The nation of Burma has experienced a big shock in recent years and the people experienced that shock in their lives too. I will talk briefly about that shock at the country level, and below I will talk about families. Thank Myint-U writes, “On January 4, 1948, Burma became formally independent as a republic outside the commonwealth. The strident nationalism which gripped the country meant that any remaining imperial connection was suspect and had to be rejected. Independence had to be total and immediate.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Yin, *Cultures of the World: Burma*, 60.

¹⁸ Yin, *Cultures of the World: Burma*, 51.

¹⁹ Myint, *The Hidden History of Burma*, 30.

But the independence was never total, nor was it immediate. Burma has a continuing history of coups, and each one is painful and causes chaos. However, there was a shift when leadership rules changed in 2015 as the National League for Democracy took the leadership. This movement was led by General Aung San, a national hero. His daughter's name is Aung San Suu Kyi. She became the leader of The National League for Democracy. They were elected to the ruling party in 2015 and the leadership was going well. It changed the leadership culture and began to develop the country. People experienced freedom and peace. However, this did not last long because the movement's leader, Aung San, was killed by another party. Right after Aung San died the military took over authority in Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi was put under house arrest by the military for many years. When she was released from house arrest, she tried to continue politics for democracy in Burma.

Trevor Wilson writes, "Many people in Myanmar had hoped that Aung San Suu Kyi would be able to resolve outstanding issues holding back regional and ethnic aspirations in Myanmar and that she might at least play a successful mediating role in reconciling long standing differences between Burman-dominated institutions and ethnic groups."²⁰

But in November 2020 Burma had an election and the National League for Democracy won, but the military party did not agree; they said the election was not fair. Actually, the election was fair enough, a win by the National League for Democracy. The

²⁰ Trevor Wilson, "Why a National Peace Agreement Is Important for Myanmar," *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 4, no. 1 (January 2017): 141–146, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/app5.159>.

military opposition demanded a rerun of the vote, claiming widespread fraud, but the election commission approved that there was no evidence to support these claims. So, the military declared a state of emergency and the coup seized control. Now people are being arrested, killed and the crackdown keeps growing. This shocking coup happened on February 01, 2021, and the people started protesting. This leadership is not legal, it is unjust and leads people to be stressed and live their lives in danger. The situation has grown worse and worse.

Who is the Leader in Burma Now?

Since the coup happened on February 1, 2021, the military commander in chief is Min Aung Hlaing; he has taken power. The people are not happy and condemned him for his role in the military's unjust attacks on ethnic minorities. Alexander Zemlianichenko writes, "Myanmar's military leader on Sunday declared himself prime minister and said he would lead the country under the extended state of emergency until elections are held in about two years."²¹

In his first public comments after the coup, General Min Aung Hlaing sought to justify the takeover. Now he is the holder of the authority in Burma. He said the military was on the side of the people and would form a true and disciplined democracy. In 2021, the military has said it will hold a "free and fair" election once the state of emergency is over.

²¹ Alexander Zemlianichenko, "Myanmar's Military Leader Declares Himself Prime Minister and Promises Elections," NPR, August 2, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/02/1023782084/myanmar-military-leader-prime-minister-elections>.

The People's Response to the Military Coup

The protestors tried to persuade the coup leaders to give back the power to the National League for Democracy because the people disagreed with the military leader's misuse of power. The protests happened with involvement of school teachers, students, lawyers, and other party government workers as well as people who are not involved in the military regime. The military started curfews and people gathered at the legal limits. In the month of March 2021, the military leader ordered the military to use water cannons, rubber bullets, and live ammunition to try to disperse protesters. At the same time, the military started shooting and killing people, or arresting them and sending them into jail.

Thinking, Beliefs and Lifestyle for Burmese Christians in West Michigan

The shock of leadership change has affected Burmese families in significant ways. The big change in the last generation is that the country has become an unsafe place and families have had to adjust to increased stress that affects the economy, schooling, Christians and their churches, and how kids learned to feel about life. The coup's great turmoil and distrust has caused family divisions among parents, children, brothers, and sisters. Some people have died and some people have run away from home; some were taken away.

The coup affected schools too Burma because schools closed and the children could not attend. This is one big effect from the military coup of 2021. The military coup caused schools to be closed and no attention is being paid to children's education. This is happening because of fear and the lack of safety for the children.

The military has also started burning homes without any reason, except to terrify, which is perhaps the most sad and terrible thing that happened. The military leadership is terrible for Burma because there is no respect, no stability or peace for the people. This is destroying what people think about the foundations of leadership in the society. Of particular concern, Christians cannot go to church for worship service because of fear and lack of safety in the public area. In Burma there is oppression of Christians and persecution of them because the leaders are non-Christian and they tend to target communities where there are many Christians.

The people's sense of safety is gone because of the coup and the military's killing and arresting people and destroying the people's properties as well. Burmese people flee to the borders of Burma and Thailand and into India. They are hungry and living without clean food and water. They need basic services, assistance with shelter, food, and clothing. Knowing how the people suffer, including my family which has fled to India, breaks my heart and my tears fall. The military coup is extremely abusive and compromises Burmese human rights. We wait for the day when rights are restored.

The coup does violence to human rights and equality and promotes discrimination because it does not care at all that all humans are born free and equal with dignity and rights. As humans, we exist and we have a fundamental right to life, and life with worth and quality such as the right to live in our own country, and have food, education, work, health, liberty, and a house. But Burma did not have those rights to liberty and freedom anymore.

God created humans in his own image and so it is important to respect other human beings. Genesis 1:26-27 says:

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

When the country's government shows such great disrespect to the people, it makes children grow up with very wrong ideas about leadership. God never intended for His children to oppress and enslave each other. He meant for human beings to take care of the earth, and for people to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18).

Chapter 2: How Burmese Servant Leaders Help Each Other

Introduction

Servant leaders in the Burmese refugee community in the United States are helping people adjust to this new culture. Burmese immigrants and refugees immigrate into the USA and face cultural obstacles and wonder how to navigate education, work, church, the laws, driving, and medical appointments—indeed, every aspect of life. In contrast, the overall power under the Burmese situation was through military dictatorship, which limited choices greatly.

Consequently, the Burmese people are accustomed to living in fear and distress. In the U.S.A the stress for them is not so much over the fear of the government but rather it is about learning everything new. Burmese Christian immigrants will walk alongside people who are learning everything about life, even as they are teaching about spiritual matters as well. There are several dimensions to the work of the servant leader. They must learn how to help people become independent in this new society. Servant leaders can help the Burmese immigrants deal with the results and after effects of living in fear before coming here.

If good leaders are to be developed from the Burmese immigrant's population, they must be helped to have a better understanding of mission. To accomplish this, Burmese refugees will need the gospel in a language. The depth of what it means to live out the Gospel must be communicated in language that speaks to their hearts and culture. We must equip them to become confident leaders who can both speak and live out the Gospel in the

cross-cultural experiences of life in the USA. Healthy relationships are needed to deal with the challenges and also to model what the body of Christ looks like in the United States.

In Burma the military dictatorship has strongly affected the pastor servant leadership ministry because there is no freedom in Burmese culture today. The culture was strongly influenced by the authoritarian military government. The military used authoritarian tactics over the people, and especially the Christians and persecution happened in Burma. The culture and leadership style affected the formation of pastors as well. I think without even being aware of it, pastors became more authoritarian. This emphasis was already there in the Baptist tradition, but with a biblical perspective.

I learned the Baptist traditional teaching about Scripture. They focus on the strong authority of the Bible and pastoral leadership. The Bible is the final authority and cannot make any error. I did not see much teaching on the importance of servant leadership, and pastors were reinforced in their tendencies to lead in an authoritarian style. Now in the Burmese immigrant community in North America, this authoritarian dimension needs to be strongly moderated. Pastors need to recover the servant leadership of Jesus; it is much needed for the Burmese immigrant. Today, this is what Burmese immigrants need from their pastors. Pastors need to refocus on the servant style of Jesus who carried out his ministry in obedience to his Father, and in service to his brothers and sisters. They need to be able to teach this truth, and maybe more important they need to be able to model it in their churches.

This chapter explores how servant leaders operate in Burmese immigrant faith communities. The immigrant's challenges are the servant leader's invitation. Burmese immigrants face challenges in navigating the new context. This requires the patience of

leaders and a growing list of skills, since Burmese servant leaders are learning alongside their service. The navigating of organizations, institutions, and processes requires different service and skills for leading. The following highlights the need for a service and what the servant leader is able to do in assisting an immigrant to navigate this new world.

The Challenges Needing Servant Leaders with and for Burmese Refugees

From the start, Burmese servant leaders helped each other when they arrived here in West Michigan. Burmese deacons and pastors come alongside new immigrants with courage, faith, joy, obedience, and humility. They seek first to serve their Burmese companions while also leading them into this new world. J. Oswald Sanders says, “Leaders require courage of the highest order-always moral courage and often physical courage as well. Courage is that quality of mind that enables people to encounter danger or difficulty firmly, without fear or discouragement.”¹ Servant leaders encourage others to take courage in the Lord. Joshua 1:7 says, “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.” The servant leader models strength and courage. In the case of the Burmese immigrants, the servant leader among them has lived through many hardships already and knows how to draw strength from the Lord. When the refugee Christians can see their leader’s example, they are more likely to listen to the leader’s instruction.

¹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1967), 60.

Servant leaders first love God and then God's followers. A faithful servant learns from difficulty and experience and applies the lessons to other people's situations and helps them. She/he is willing to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit's leading. A Christian leader is willing to learn and if there is need to change, willingly accepts the change.

A servant leader loves to follow Jesus and is available to teach others the love of Christ, how to follow Jesus, and follow in his steps faithfully. A servant leader serves the master with joy and learns direction. A good servant leader will serve with joy and enthusiasm whatever he is assigned to do. For example, servant leaders accomplish tasks by faithfully following the master under leading, guiding and willingness to lead God's people. Philippians 4:4-5 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."

Language: The experience and quality of everyday life is affected by language barriers. This can affect feelings of discouragement which work against joyful witness. So, for example, English as a Second Language (ESL) class is important to be able to speak another language. Servant leaders help others by providing transportation to go to ESL class. We can demonstrate that we take these responsibilities seriously in practical ways. For example, the servant leader can help the immigrants practice their new language skills. Churches can provide classes in which people can practice their English. They can show them how important it is to their success and wellbeing to learn to speak English. Learning the new culture and language helps to develop better understanding of a new land. And, importantly, learning the new language can help them to read the English Bible, giving them

a stronger relationship with others in the community. Language is at the root of building good values and relationships.

In addition, they will need help with phone calls reading and understanding bills. Here again the language issue proves to be a big stumbling block, eating away at confidence and competence. This area is particularly important so that circumstances can change for the better. Servant leaders can help them build confidence when making by providing settings in which to practice. Servant leadership, when lived out in practical ways like this, will help them to feel safe and confident.

These are ways pastors can help, or find help for the refugee, and significantly reduce fear, stress and loneliness. Doing so will enhance peace within the community. Servant leaders must be available to reduce stress and make their people more comfortable and thus are able to bring down stress in their families. The family will be happy and more content when they find better jobs and can meet family needs.

Hence, servant leaders are important for the health of the church body and for the community in many ways. Warren W. Wiersbe says, “Christian leadership is to help others reach their full potential for service.”²

Sharing culture becomes a way to relate to immigrants, and cultural knowledge is essential for building understanding, respect, support, and missional living. Servant leaders can advocate building relationships with others in the community, learning the needs, giving encouragement and a helping hand. It is important to understand the value of love and

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *On Being a Leader for God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 37.

acceptance. Sometimes it is simply learning how people in West Michigan think, and why they think that way.

Social service: In West Michigan, the Burmese congregation is comprised predominantly of people who cannot speak good English, so the servant leader's availability to speak English as an advocate is crucial. I will share an example of what I will call a ministry of accompaniment. When working with a job seeker, I call the agency office and make an appointment. After making an appointment with the agency, I take them to the office and help them fill out the application. The office then asks for the proper documents and starts the interview. I help translate during the job interview. When the office accepts the applicant, they initiate the communication about starting work. Even at the company workplace I often go with them and explain what needs to be done. For example, they may not understand the concept of break time, punctuality, or clocking in and clocking out.

Usually by the time the first six months are past, parents are working hard at a new job. After one year they can apply for permanent resident cards; until then, they will hold a work permit card. After five years they can apply to become naturalized citizens. Typically, they work in industrial, assembly, and meat-packaging companies.

Schools: Children may attend public schools for free, which is a great benefit. In Myanmar, school fees are the norm. This is one of the benefits for children; they learn both English and U.S. culture. The children quite naturally learn language and culture at school. They also can have free breakfast and lunch, and tuition at public schools is free. In the U.S. Burmese immigrants have great opportunities going to school. The servant leader can help families understand these challenges and opportunities in the U.S. In Burma the parents need

to support their children in school. They need to pay tuition and lunch. They cannot attend school without family help because nothing is free in the school. Burmese Christians immigrants have great opportunities living in a new culture here in the U.S.

Housing: After two to four years most Burmese can afford to buy their own houses. This is a great blessing for the people, but they must do so with wisdom and prudence. Again, the servant leader has a role to play in helping the Burmese immigrants make the best decision for their family. They can help them to open a banking account, both saving and checking, to manage their finances. They have credit and bank cards, which are important for immigrants to understand the advantages and dangers of these. Immigrants may not understand the liabilities of accumulating debt at high interest rates. The good servant leader will talk with them about this and walk them through some of their big financial decisions.

Food: Burmese immigrants enjoy American food because it is a great blessing and opportunity living in the U.S. They can have any food here in the U.S. For example, rice, corn, fish, pork, chicken, beef, eggs and vegetables. It is difficult to have good food in Burma because of the poor country and lack of good resources. But here in the US they have good nutrition and plenty of healthy variety in their foods. Christian immigrants receive these blessings and enjoy this plentiful food.

Laws: Since Burmese law is different from American law, immigrants need to learn and understand the basic law. This becomes urgent in situations like arrests, domestic violence, and labor law. Servant leadership can show respect for the laws in the new country, and explain how the laws make sense.

Another example occurs when driving a car. To be able to drive a car, the minimum age is 16 years old. In the USA we cannot drive after drinking alcohol, which is considered being under the influence. Some of the immigrants do not know this information. Drivers also have the requirement of purchasing car insurance. This too is new to the immigrants. Following all traffic laws and signals is important, and can cost the unknowing driver money and points against their license. The law requires wearing a seatbelt and having a proper car seat for smaller children. All of this must be patiently explained the Burmese immigrants. The servant leader can help them learn about all of these important regulations.

Family is vital. A healthy family life is especially vital for the Burmese Christian immigrants. Strong families will make living more comfortable for these relationship-based people in a task- and system-based society like the U.S.A. Knowing who you are in community is essential. Simple, clear, comfortable relationships are part of living the mission.

What Does Servant Leadership Look Like

Consider first the difference between slaves and servants: slaves are under the total control of another and follow the master's orders. A slave is someone who is given specific tasks without any opportunity to do what they want to do. Slaves have no authority at all to do anything without the exact permission or orders of the master. The master can treat the slave badly; it all depends on the master's will. The slave's work is hard labor in response to the master's will. In contrast, a servant has a degree of free will. But how is the servant of Christ to exercise that will? As Christians, the servant wants to serve his master well because

he loves the master. Being a servant is how we serve Christ in ways that glorify God. Servant leaders build trust and learn what it takes to serve others.

Jesus loves people and makes everything open to them. Jesus calls us believer no longer servants, but friends. In John 15:15, Jesus says, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” This signals a change in the disciples’ relationship with Jesus. He had brought them to the point where they were now no longer servants but friends. This is to be the goal of the servant leader.

In Romans 1, Paul calls himself a “servant of Jesus Christ” (v. 1). But Paul knew whom he served—Jesus Christ, his Savior. Consider servants of Jesus Christ as “free slaves”—that is, the total service of a slave but with a willing heart that seeks the good of the master. In other words, obedience is not coerced, but is freely given. As servant leaders we can say to others that Jesus makes us able to escape from the world “into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” Onesimus is an example of a slave whom Paul sent back to his owner “no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother” (Philemon 16). Viewed through this lens, we gain a much different understanding of what it means to be a servant leader. Greenleaf says the Servant is generous: “It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”³

³ Robert K., Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant: Reflections on Religious Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 2.

Obedience

Servant leadership shows submission and the importance of respecting other people's will. The opposite of obedient is rebellious and refusing to do things for others. Servant leaders' obedience to God and service of other people is what is needed in the ministry. Henri J.M. Nouwen writes, "Jesus was obedient to God unto death, even death on the cross."⁴ Jesus is seeking his Father's will and is submissive to his Father. He brings together a group of people hoping for a new life. Servant leaders can celebrate the life of obedience which Jesus's followers develop. Jesus made obedience the way of life to victory. Servant leaders' obedience is the way to lead and succeed in the ministry. In Hebrews 5:8 says, "Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered."

Humility

John Stott says, "Fundamental to all Christian leadership and ministry is a humble personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, devotion to him expressed in daily prayer and love for him expressed in daily obedience."⁵ Humble servant leaders do not put themselves first. They are good listeners, peacemakers, and in humility also show love, kindness and patience to others. Ephesians 4:2 says, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." God chose people to be holy and humble, and to worship him alone. Pride has no place in ministry; humility is the opposite of pride because pride believes that it knows the most, but humility recognizes others' wisdom and gifts.

⁴ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 109.

⁵ John Stott, *Basic Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, An Imprint of Intervarsity Press, 2002), 101.

Humble servant leaders rejoice when other people achieve success and recognize them with humility. Followers of Jesus are called to a humble lifestyle. Colossians 3:12 says, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Jesus, Servant and Leader

Jesus’ life is connecting people each other and serving them and changing the way they live. That is why He dedicated his life to free the people. Jesus heals the broken heart, cast out demons, and proclaims, the Kingdom of God is near.” Love is living in truth and obedience to the actions and life of Jesus Christ. The story of Jesus who loved us and himself for us.

The first characteristic of servant leaders is love. The love of Jesus is very pure and holy. Jesus loved and that is shown by his death on the cross for the forgiveness of sin for the whole world. Romans 5:8 says, “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry, writes, “Leading like Jesus loves your spouse, your child, or your friend even when that love requires a vulnerability authenticity that closes the chasm between saying and doing. It requires holding loved ones accountable while at the same time extending grace and forgiveness.”⁶A servant leader's love will motivate other people because love is action and leads to commitment. A servant leader's love moves to action to serve the needs of others.

⁶ Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Publishing Group: An Imprint of Thomas Nelson, 2016), 46.

Love is powerful; it motivates, guiding the leader to serve the needs of people in ways that help them learn and grow.

Sacrifice is the second act of servant leaders. Jesus sacrificed all his life unto death for the people. Jesus committed to bear sin even though He had no sin; Christ's sacrificed for our sins. Christ's sacrifice brings hope and relationship with God. Isaiah 53:12 says, "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." The servant leader pours out his or her life in service without expecting anything in return.

The Importance of Servant Leadership - For the People and for the Work

Servant leadership is the opposite of the military dictatorship model that most Burmese immigrants assume when they grow up in Burma. The refugees have left behind experiences that were harmful and painful, which is the opposite of how Jesus would do things. The American economic system has many faults too, and there is much selfishness and hunger for power among government leaders. So, the church and its pastors have a big challenge—how to teach the Jesus way and live it, and how to show that it is a way of love and genuine assistance and not mere words that sound nice. How do we live a new way of Jesus between the world of capitalism and dictatorship?

For example, servant leaders should model how to be a humble leader with the team and lead them patiently. The leader's words are then put into action by the team. And the leader provides an opportunity for the team to talk about what they experienced, what they heard, what they did in response, and how they might give leadership to others. The leader

gives the team an opportunity to discuss how to listen as well as lead, how to listen for what are the needs, and what are the possible solutions.

If the church is going to grow like the body of Christ, and if people are going to live out the way of Jesus, then the leaders in the church must be models and teachers of servant leadership. The people of Burma must have leaders who help show Jesus. Especially the young people need to see and learn a new model of leadership—a Jesus model. Leaders in the church need to think carefully about how to show that in the church and in the society, and then be very strong in teaching this to young people. This will be very difficult because it will be so new, so different, so self-denying, and will require church members to pay attention daily to discipleship and how to build it in families and churches. Servant leadership is important because it involves good communication and respecting others. Servant leadership helps people develop and gives encouragement. Servant leaders encourage people to have confidence in their own ideas and to build creative teams. For example, servant leaders encourage people to respect each other's time and manage its use wisely.

Servant communication is important: Servant leadership connects, and so communication skills are important because this helps with active listening and relationship building. A leader's good communication is necessary to lead with trust and show good manners as values. Douglas McGregor says, "The best a leader can do is understand the conditions creating a climate of growth and do everything possible to irrigate."⁷ Servant leadership and the job: The servant leader's job should be leading with a good attitude and

⁷ Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: The McGraw Hill Companies, Inc, 2006), xi.

servicing others. A servant leader can show willingness to help respond to what people ask for to support their effort. This, as Bannie E. Goodwin II observes, will, and “involves planning, promoting and developing procedures.”⁸

So effective Servant leadership includes planning ahead; this is what the teams need to do for both long and short-term goals. For example, a leader’s plans should be clear and have specific objectives. Servant leaders should be task oriented, knowledgeable and understood by everyone. Pastoral servant leadership plans should be centered in Christ and his people and seek to be efficient at meeting people's problems and developing their potential. A servant plan should seek God’s will and guidance, and desire to follow. For servant leadership to work, the plans and outcomes should impress both people's minds and hearts. Servant leaders should make sure the people are involved in all the plans as much as possible. A leader should tell the people the importance and benefits of the plans and program directly. This will involve the people and make more effective ministry. Evaluation is also important because people can learn from the result and do the right things at the right time the next time. Servant leaders need to ask questions and listen well to set the plan and goals to reach what needs to be done to complete the task. Servant leaders not only act like good leaders themselves, but good leaders show interest in helping the people to become great leaders.

Why Is Servant Leadership Necessary for People Who Follow Jesus?

Servant leadership is necessary to show that while leading like Jesus, not only creative things can be done with the people, but it is also practical. Today pastoral servant

⁸ Bennie E. Goodwin II, *The Effective Leader* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 33.

leadership can do the same things as Jesus did with love because love can make many things possible. Servant leadership shows sacrificial love for the people because servant leaders follow Jesus Christ. For example, servant leader sacrifice means giving first to God all energy and time. Matthew 6: 33 says, “But seeks first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

J.M.Nouwen write,“ The great message that we have to carry, as ministers of God’s word and followers of Jesus, is that God loves us not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God has created and redeemed us in love and chosen us to proclaim that love is the true source of all human life.”⁹ Paul, in Philippians 2:3-8 says:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross.

Servant leadership is necessary to build and develop leader because then they can learn to have the specific minds and thoughts to do the right thing. A leader can recruit people who want to become better at their task. Goodwin says of leader, “out leaders' recruiting efforts, “They look for people with particular qualities and qualifications who can use or be trained to use their talents, gifts and other resources to meet the particular needs that have been identified.”¹⁰ As the historical record in Exodus tells us, “Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made

⁹ Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 17.

¹⁰ Goodwin, *The Effective Leader*, 38.

them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves” (Exodus 18: 24-26). As servant leaders serve other people, so Moses also served other people better, by seeing their gifts and delegating leadership tasks.

A servant leader should choose as disciples those who could serve as future leaders and disciples. A leader should identify present challenges that anybody can be involved in. The leadership job requirements are knowledge, skills, and commitment. For leaders encouragement is important for the people because that motivates people to carry the responsibility of the task given and to learn to prepare ahead. That means leadership training is also important so people can learn new things and develop the ministry. Jesus trains the disciples who are fishermen, but Jesus changes their life to become fishers of people.

Matthew 4: 18-20, says:

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people. At once they left their nets and followed him. Jesus' leadership style is never upset because he knows who sent him to show servant leadership in the world. Today servant leadership can show servanthood by loving and encouraging other people.

Mark 10:42-45 says:

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

This true and wonderful teaching by Jesus about how to be great means to desire to follow Christ in service. Jesus' can make everyone great but the important thing is the desire to be good follower. Burmese Christian leaders can lead others to obedience and commitment to follow Christ.

Servant leaders can become greater because they follow Jesus who shows his humility and they learn from his true greatness. A leader needs to live out both grace and truth even when difficulty may occur, because Jesus' way always makes for eternal victory. Jesus' servant leadership calls the disciples to be willing to lead with a good attitude like his. Servant leaders should show that leading the people is practical and sensible and means doing the right thing before them. As pastors of the flock, servant leaders show the virtue of serving and protecting the people. Servant leadership is humble and has the mindset of living before God and learning always from Christ. Philippians 2:5 says, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Jesus' servant leadership is how he knows himself; even though he has the very nature of God he is willing to make himself empty." Max De Pree writes, "Good relationships are rooted in gratitude."¹¹ Today servant leadership is important for learning the power of Jesus; it is depending on his leading and guidance and imitating his relationship with his Father.

Jesus himself cared for the disciples and helped their weakness to become strong faith. He was patient even though it took them a long time to learn. As leaders we need to have patience to help other people to come closer to Jesus and have a good relationship with him. In John 13:15-17, Jesus says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

¹¹ Max De Pree, *Leadership Jazz* (New York: Crown Business, an Imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, 1992), xvii.

Servant leadership is serving others, but serving is not simply doing tasks like cleaning someone's house or car; rather it has the deeper meaning of always trusting each other and learning from Christ while honoring others and seeking their good. It is like cleaning from the inside out, changing because Jesus' blood cleanses sins and purifies hearts and the Holy Spirit lives within human hearts. This cleaning is originated by God. In Genesis 12:2 we read of God choosing Abram and promising to do a marvelous work with him. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing." Pastoral servant leadership means serving and helping others with trust and openness, and with understanding. But it takes the power of God working in us to make these big and wonderful changes in us.

The Main Goal of the Servant Leader

A servant leader's main goal should be vision for other people. This leads to good communication, development and growth. That is the starting place of a leader's role and this leads to development of others. Servant leaders should depend on the word of God and be humble to allow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The goal should be clear and easy to understand as the leader encourages meeting the needs of others first, and helps people feel comfort in times of change and develop the highest performance possible.

A servant leadership's goals can facilitate and help other people empower individuals and the teams group to grow. At my congregation, the main goal in leadership is first individual growth, followed by group development. The goal is not that they stay in the same place but that they grow in grace in Jesus Christ.

Burmese Christian immigrants' servant leaders can enhance unity within the congregation by helping them focus on growing meaningful relationships with each other. Good relationships lead to strong connections within the congregation and help the ministry grow. De Pree writes, "At the core of becoming a leader is the need always to connect one's voice and one's touch."¹² Servant leaders should explain to the congregation what leader's vision is for the Church, and the people.

Burmese immigrant servant leadership becomes reality, practical life and skill examples develop in the team and teams learn how to influence and lead others, first guiding individuals and then groups to reach the main goals. Today my congregation's aim is that servant leaders show open communication and good relationships with each other, and help members meet each other's needs. To be successful, servant leadership goals are first to make the vision and second to inspire people.

A leadership vision is important so that people can see what action needs to be done and follow leadership direction. In my congregation we open the vision for developing the ministry by sharing the vision together with each other and then we plan the following actions. The second big step is to inspire servant leadership which encourages and inspires about the vision to help us be successful in ministry. Pastoral servant leadership inspires people to see and submit to the steps to do the job. The servant leader's kindness and love create more commitment and emotional trust in the leader and that produces fruitful ministry. In my congregation clear goals make for better communication and stronger connections with each other. The connections formed by servant leadership are not fear and discouragement,

¹² De Pree, *Leadership Jazz*, 2.

but rather encouraging each other to grow closer. When goals are clear people can see the leader's vision and work together.

Burmese immigrant leaders need companions along the way; servant leaders are key companions in the journey. The most important thing Burmese immigrants need from others is humility and learning from Christ. As the Burmese refugee church is led by pastor and deacons, it is important that they should know their position and responsibility. The deacon is the helper for the pastor and members and does not primarily exercise authority. A leader should know the specifics of his or her calling. In the Burmese church, we need to start leadership training programs early, including youth leadership, women leadership, and deacon leadership that will be helpful in the overall church mission.

Why Burmese Refugee Leadership in West Michigan Must Show Servant Leadership

Servant leadership: A leader in the church, especially a pastor servant leader, can be creative with further activities and development of the ministry within the congregation. In Burmese congregations here in west Michigan leaders enjoy leading the congregation and being able to try some things and let people see leadership happen. Servant leaders see that the people love God and care for each other. Then, the servant leader first needs to develop the vision and then be willing to lead the people into Christ's work. Amos 3:7 says, "For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets."

Servant leadership should be looking ahead, which means seeing what the people will need and developing steps to meet those needs. The servant leaders can lead with community and congregation in showing love for God through the planning. Servant leaders

should love the people and be committed to help them, which often mean that leaders pray with them and help find social services. Servant leaders need to lead the congregation in ways that serve. This means leading with love as the leader makes more disciples. A leader can make a difference by helping to form what the people love and so can succeed in the congregation.

1. Reading the Bible: Servant leaders strongly encourage their congregation to engage with the Scriptures because it nourishes them with spiritual food and meets their daily basic needs in leadership. Bible reading means taking God's word into heart and mind to encourage and lead in the right way on the right path. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

2. Prayer in Leadership: It is easy to feel no importance in Christian prayer, because the leader may be impatient, but servant leaders should take heed to pray and to make prayer ministry part of leadership. Prayer changes every situation; it heals worries about life and makes people more open to learn new things from God's word; that is an important part of ministry. Acts 6:4 says: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

3. Preaching Ministry: After reading the Bible and praying the servant leader should collect what touches the heart or calls. Then the leader can start preparing the sermon. Preaching the correct words is powerful and important because then people can receive the message in the right way with the right words. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

4. **Administration:** Among the leadership opportunities in our Burmese congregation is the role of committee chairperson. The congregation selects the executive committee directly which is the leadership in the church. As the pastor, I am involved in both the leadership role and ministry; this helps me have better connection with the congregation. Pastoral ministry and leadership roles in the Church are vital, because then the leader can focus more on the ministry and lead the people to put roots deep into the word of God.

Max De Pree comments, “Leadership is, as you know, not a position but a job.”¹³ A servant leader positively sees the importance of a leader's job to do the work of the ministry. Again, Paul in 1 Timothy 1:3-4 says, “As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.”

5. **Holy Communion:** Conducting Holy Communion is one of the important roles of the servant leader. We as servant leaders act in the name of Jesus here on earth doing the ministry for the kingdom of God. Jesus told his disciples that his earthly ministry was going to end and he was going to die on the cross. So he called the disciples to join together in the supper for the remembrance of his suffering for the love of humankind. Jesus died for the world so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life; that is a very powerful love for people. Paul recalls that holy moment when he said, 1 Corinthians 11:24–26 says,

And when he Jesus had given thanks, he broke the bread and said; “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever

¹³ De Pree, *Leadership Jazz*, 18.

you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”

As Christians we believe in sharing the spiritual ritual of Holy Communion. Servant leaders are serving together with the members of the one body in Christ. Servant leader and congregation can learn from the sacramental life of our Lord which means humbly to unite into Christ. Jesus served the bread and wine to the disciples. It is renewal of servant leadership that builds the humility and strength of the Holy Communion. Leading as pastor and servant is building and acknowledging the Spiritual union between Christ and his followers.

At Home: Servant leadership development begins with family love. In my congregation I see that families love each other and cooperate. Servant leader parents start with family prayer together. As leader I start with equipping my own kids to become servant leaders. This means caring and helping with homework, reading, and their spiritual formation. Family love is important at home and church; this means at home we start with love and that leads to faithful church attendance and worshipping at the church together. For example, servant leadership strengthens love for God and people. In the family the most powerful and important things we can do is pray and love each other. Servant leader's prayer is for the Lord to watch over the family and to rejoice in that family. I see that in my congregation and in my family, praying brings more peace in every aspect of life and worship. Prayer says thank you to God, trusting even in the difficult times, and knowing God is God. Servant leadership prayer is crucial to make a leader strong; that means nothing can separate them from loving and praying to God.

Burmese Christian immigrants work together which we begin to learn at home along with spiritual growth and loving each other, and we learn at Church where we go for worship service faithfully and so build strong relationships. I put my family in first at all times. For example, we relax, pray, and work together, playing and teaching and guiding the children as their needs change. As children grow, I need to be coaching them and hanging with them. Another important part of family life is keeping a marriage covenant and making sure to be faithful. Because God made humans uniquely able to live in relationship with him, husband and wife and family are made uniquely able to bring glory to God through this relationship.

Love in Servant Leadership Development: Servant leadership begins with love - loving self and loving others. A leader loves self, meaning respecting and caring for self and then being eager to lead other people. Leadership does lead with love—the more excellent way, as it is called in 1Corinthians 13: 13 says, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

As servant leadership develops in West Michigan, leaders can show how to work hard and help meet other’s needs. A leader’s goal should be accomplishing the mission for the ministry. Servant leadership should inspire others to follow the steps of Christ. As leaders it is not position, but character humility and patience that have the power. As servant leaders we develop first trust and then inspire the people to see the vision and commit to the mission goals. Servant leadership results can be seen in the following.

Servant Leadership Sets an Example: In the Burmese immigrant’s congregation in West Michigan leadership shows good examples of doing servant tasks. For instance, leaders help others to be creative as they love other people. A loving leader creates more followers,

inspires them, and in turn makes better followers. It is also important to do the right things every time. This is not always easy, but this is how to help develop effective teams that will imitate good servant leadership.

A servant's leadership does well for others. This is important for growing and developing commitment. The servant leader is one who represents Christ's love and does the right thing. A leader walks with integrity and loves to lead the right way and create a culture in which to serve with the people.

Chapter 3: What Is Servant Leadership

Introduction

There is no shortage of writing or definitions of servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf and Kenneth Blanchard are the key voices of servant leadership. Others continue to write and offer perspective, including the lengthy contribution of the *Journal of Servant Leadership*. Sophia Lee offers the following as a newer perspective: “Servant leadership puts the needs, growth, and wellbeing of followers first.” This chapter reviews the foundational literature on servant leadership and demonstrates how servant leadership is a biblical model of leadership that can guide Burmese Christians in living and leading at church, in the community, and at home.

Servant Leadership

David Delp writes, “Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy in which the main goal of the leader is to serve the interests of others.”¹ Servant leadership involves inner character, a change process that makes leaders more effective, leaders with more desire to commit to ministry and more willingness to serve. It makes leaders more like Jesus the Servant. The Bible shows that it is a daily commitment to the word of God. In the biblical context servant leadership is known as leading others to relationship with God; in other words, leading people to a radically transformational life. It is connecting people to lifelong

¹ David Delp, “Being and Becoming a Transformational Servant Leader,” Calibrate 360 (blog), June 27, 2019, <https://calibrate360.com/transformational-servant-leader/>.

discipleship. Neal F. McBride write, “A servant serves by leading and a leader leads by service.”²

As Greenleaf observes, “Servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”³ The servant leader helps in decision-making times while serving the people. As individuals develop it is important that their ethics also develop so that they form a deep goodness of character.

Aubrey Malphurs notes, “Christian leaders are servants with credibility and capabilities, who are able to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction.”⁴ A servant who wants to help others includes the edification of communities as well. Servant leaders are humble before God and other people. Servant leaders serve other people with love and passion.

Servant leader Wesley Shotwell writes, “Practicing servant leadership in Christian ministry is self-giving service with others after the pattern of Christ through example and persuasion in order to achieve extraordinary commitment and contributions toward mutually shared kingdom goals.”⁵ Servant leadership is a practice essential to the practice of leadership. It is self-giving service to others within the context of relationships. Servant

² Neal F. McBride, *How to Lead Small Groups* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, A Ministry of The Navigators, 1990), 37.

³ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant: Reflections on Religious Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 2.

⁴ Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 33.

⁵ Wesley Shotwell, *The Power of Being a Servant* (Keller, TX: Austin Brother Publishing, 2011), 28.

leaders should be ready to set up new ways to build missions. Such people will exercise the concept of serving others' needs and willingly make commitments.

John Stott writes of leadership that it is, "Someone who commands the following. To lead is to go ahead, to show the way and to inspire other people to follow."⁶ A leader needs to walk the way God shows to lead people. A good example of a good leader is Paul because he never lost his vision and leadership style. God appointed Paul to lead Gentiles in mission to bring the gospel to them. Servant leaders need to lead others in the way they should go with patience. The servant leader's mission should lead with love. A servant leader's love for God and others is very important. Leadership is not about a good job; rather it is about casting a vision for necessary changes required in any system. It is about directing those changes and implementing them. Leadership is someone able to lead transformation. Good leaders did not blame other people; rather they want to develop them to grow in their spiritual life. Leadership wants to help others do what they themselves do. A leader leads other people into new things, learning to be faithful in action. Leadership is also learning by reflecting on experience. Today Church leaders need to look at Paul's leadership as a model of mature spiritual leadership. Paul suffered and bore much pain in his life but Paul never gave up his servant leadership because his call came from God.

⁶ John Stott, *Basic Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 11.

Servant Leadership is a Commitment to Put Others First to Help Build Loving Relationships

Servant leadership includes encouragement, yet they do more than merely help other people by encouraging words. Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Phyllis Hendry write, “A key aspect of effective encouragement is catching people doing something right. The goal is to accentuate the positive, and Philippians 4:8 encourages us to do the same: Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”⁷ The wise servant leader will notice when people are doing these things and take advantage of the opportunity to affirm their positive actions.

When a servant leader is an encouraged by word or action results are achieved. Jeff Caliguire writes, “Leaders are encouraging people to surpass them,”⁸ Encouraging servant leaders helps people experience comfort and joy and peace. Servant leaders listen to God and find encouragement from his Holy Spirit. In this way they can gain inner strength that they then pass on to others. And for this, they also need the help of fellow Christians. Oswald Sanders writes “Jethro encouraged Moses by articulating the spiritual principle of timeless relevance. If you do this and God commands, you will be able to stand the strain (Exodus 18:23).”⁹

People can sometimes see that leaders also may need encouragement to work together. We need each other and we all need Jesus. Warren W. Wiersbe writes, “Leaders are

⁷ Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group: An Imprint of Thomas Nelson, 2016), 227.

⁸ Jeff Caliguire, *Leadership Secrets* (Tulsa, OK: River Ork Publishing, 2003), 139.

⁹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1967), 140.

people and they work with people, and we will have the same human limitations and need the same divine help and encouragement."¹⁰ John 15:5 says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." All leaders have human limitations, but divine encouragement will bring them spiritual energy. Servant leadership encourages people to see that everyone's opinion and contribution is valuable. Christlike leaders have the ability to see the needs of the ministry within the congregation. A servant leader will prioritize modeling personal dignity and love to help others.

Another servant leader gift is caring. Servant leaders who truly care for others show how they are loved and cared for in their own situation. A leader's kindness and compassion help the people feel safe and work together, just as God's care for his people leads them to become more like Him. Aubrey Malphurs writes, "Care is the leader's demonstration of concern for the well-being of his or her followers that flows from love of them. God cares about his people and he wants us to care about them too."¹¹ A leader has a desire to serve and give to the people, which mean putting first the needs of others. For example, Burmese immigrants care for each other in practical ways. We see this here in West Michigan when immigrants have a need for transportation. The immigrant family that has a car is quick to arrange a carpooling system for the benefit of others. Servant leaders can help encourage and coordinate this. Another example is how I care for my own children's needs each day. Together my wife and I provide for their feeding and their clothing. We listen to them when

¹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *On Being Leader for God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 21.

¹¹ Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books A Division of Baker House Co., 2003), 65.

they have problems, questions, or fears. Importantly, we read the Bible and pray with them. We tell them the story of love of Jesus Christ and salvation. They observe in our lives that we live for Christ. Servant leaders' care for others starts with their willingness to serve, shows honor to God, and demonstrates patient love to the people. Galatians 6:2 says, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Finally, servant leadership is empowering: Empowering servant leaders encourage people with their action and help them grow in ministry. Jeff Caliguire writes, about empowering Paul to see his life," He believed that God empowered him, stating, " I can do everything through him who gives me strength" Philippians 4:13."¹² Serving leaders can empower others by doing the right things with them. How do leaders know the right things? By depending on the Spirit's power. Brian J.Dodd writes, "Distinctively Christian hallmarks of leadership found in the Bible are all but absent most of the time in popular Christian literature: self-sacrificial servanthood, love, and gentleness. Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered ministry through weak vessels, prayer, suffering, and the like."¹³

Servant Leadership in a Biblical Context

The entirety of Scripture demonstrates servant leadership in the characters and narratives. Nehemiah, Moses, and Joshua demonstrate servant leadership. Additionally, as is documented by many Southern Baptist writers, Jesus is the ultimate servant leader. Everywhere he went, Jesus cared for the people. He heard their cries and he loved them.

¹² Caliguire, *Leadership Secrets*, 164.

¹³ Brian J. Dodd, *Empowered Church Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 13.

Psalm 34:17 says, “The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.” When he came to earth, Christ showed how he can deliver us from all our troubles.

Throughout the Scriptures we see stories of how servant leaders and how they served God and others. I will explore the lives of these characters and then turn to offer a biblical and pastoral practice of servant leadership.

Confessing and Listening to God: Nehemiah

One example is Nehemiah's leadership in Nehemiah 1:4-7 says, “When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said: “Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.”

Nehemiah knows about the Jerusalem wall and Temple, but first he needs to talk to God about it, so he starts praying to God. God led Nehemiah to servant leadership. Nehemiah hears the voice of God and dedicates his life to leading God’s people as His servant for the service of rebuilding the wall.

The first task of the pastoral servant leader is to listen to God and receive the call to lead. A leader as a servant takes time to listen to God, brings his own will into line with

God's will, and encourages others, as well as increasing motivation to serve God and other people. Servant leadership looks like the servant Nehemiah praying and confessing as he is prepared to lead God's people in the service of God. Karen Whiting writes, "Nehemiah showed us how to pray to God and listen for his answers."¹⁴

Servant leaders in the biblical stories lead with humility and love and that is the root of faithfulness in ministry. Because a leader is humble, she or he is obedient to God and committed to serve the people. Servant leadership is biblically based when the leader loves God and makes encouragement and success of others the priority. Neal F. McBride writes, "The leader is responsible to assist and encourage the group in individual and mutual spiritual growth as an active member of the group, rather than as a detached observer. In doing this, the attitudes and actions of a servant must prevail."¹⁵ A servant leader's love sees the shining power of God in serving others' needs and that glorifies God. One important way this love will be shown is through effective communication. And good communication starts by carefully listening to the other person to gain understanding. Barbara Baggerly –Hinojosa writes, "The average individual spends considerably more time each day in listening than in speaking, writing or reading. Therefore, improving your listening skills is a very important communicative task."¹⁶

¹⁴Karen Whiting, "Who Was Nehemiah & Why Is He Important in the Bible?" Crosswalk.com, November 21, 2018, <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/who-was-nehemiah-why-is-he-important-in-the-bible.html>.

¹⁵ Neal F. McBride, *How to Lead Small Groups* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1990), 32.

¹⁶ Barbara Baggerly-Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics of a Servant Leader* (Self-Published: Lulu, 2020), 2.

Pastor servant-leaders should desire to listen to God's leading the people on the right path. The servant leader longs for the people to listen to God and God's truth. The servant leader understands the congregation's need for security and encourages the people. As Nehemiah trusted God's leadership, he gained the strength and wisdom to be a wise servant leader himself. A faithful and trustworthy servant becomes a faithful and trustworthy leader.

Leading and Advocating for Those Who Oppose You: Moses in Numbers 12

Moses as servant leader stands faithful to God even when opposition occurs in his life; he can do this because he knows well who God is—he met him in the burning bush. Moses' one passion is to serve the God who met him through serving the people. Moses clearly understands how a servant leader follows the right way, and he is the best example in the Bible other than Jesus. Moses left a great example for us, both in his passion to know God and in his love for the people who followed him. But it was not easy for him, and the people did not always want to follow. When we serve as Moses did, we will suffer together, learn together, and in the end we will help others together.

Today a servant leader should know God well and be dedicated to leading the people to God even when they are obstinate, aggressive, and envious. Servant leaders must learn all things work according to God's purpose and timing. Moses is the servant of God who is listening to God's call to lead his people out of slavery. This led him to be humble and to serve with his people. Numbers 12:3 says, "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth."

Even his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron—his own family—oppose him. Moses prays to God and is humble before him. Moses prays to God and is humble before Him. His

prayer is answered, because God is faithful and Moses' servant leadership was truly humble. It was by listening to God's voice that he led the people out of Egypt. Moses then met many difficult situations in the wilderness but still obeyed God's call faithfully even when the people did not want to be faithful. In Numbers 12, we learn what God thought of Moses. God tells the people that He spoke to His prophets in dreams and visions (v. 6). Then God says, "But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (vv. 7–8).

The Burmese Christian servant leader's most important ministry for God is humility. God's call upon a servant leader is to be humble and rely entirely upon God. A leader's pride leads to failure. There are different kinds of failure. For instance, we can fail at a school exam because we did not properly prepare. Pride is usually at the center of our failure. We thought we were ready, but the results showed that we were not. Christopher Terry writes, "Moses knew that he was nothing special, and he was not able to do what God had asked him to do. What Moses said was true, and is true in the lives of all those that God calls to leadership. We cannot do what God has called us to do in our own strength, and we are nothing special."¹⁷ And yet Moses, despite his humility, still failed. He failed when he took the responsibility of the children of Israel upon himself instead of doing exactly what God had instructed him to do. This caused him to get angry and strike the rock twice (Numbers 20:9-12). Moses's mistake is a great caution for all of us.

¹⁷ Christopher Terry, "Leadership Principles of Moses," Walking in The Way of Christ (blog), September 17, 2007, <https://crt010304.wordpress.com/2007/09/17/leadership-principles-of-moses/>.

Joshua: The Leader Called by God

In the biblical account Joshua is called by God to replace Moses and to lead Israel. Joshua is faithful and willing to serve Israel, helping them and bringing the people back to God. Joshua is a great man of God and he is the leader of Israel. He is a humble servant leader and willing to lead God's people. Exodus 24:13 says, "Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide and Moses went up on the mountain of God." He is another servant leader. Joshua 1:1-7 says,

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

Joshua's servant leadership is a leadership of prayer. He is praying for his people. Joshua first listens and trusts God for what he needs to do. In Joshua 7:6, we see how he sought the Lord first. And all of the elders followed his example. The text says, "Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same and sprinkled dust on their heads."

As servant leaders it is important to recognize that God is the one calling us to serve and lead the people. A servant leader is given the task to carry the good news to everyone; that is the reality. The leader should seek the Kingdom of God based on the Lord's leading. In West Michigan, the Burmese Christian immigrants must focus on the biblical leadership

model, which requires faithful study of the Bible. As they do so, they will see these examples of humility and leadership among God's faithful servants. And the servant leader will learn to be a man of prayer and humble leadership for his people. Pastor servant leaders put God first and trust God for his help.

Jesus Servant Leadership Expressed Love Through Sacrificial Life

Jesus expressed love in servant leadership through a sacrificial life of obedience to his Father. Jesus became flesh and experienced human needs. J.Oswald Sanders writes, "Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."¹⁸

Jesus servant leadership love is expressed by becoming flesh. He comes to those who oppose him in the flesh; he listens deeply to the Father; he continues the mission of God delivered to Israel and given to the Son of God. He holds the entirety of servant leadership in his one person rather than pieces of servant leadership discovered in others throughout scripture. In the end, as we dedicate our lives to Christ, we grow in Christ and begin to hold more and more capacity to lead and serve.

Jesus experienced thirst and hunger just like other people. He invited all the people to drink; this means come into Christ. John 19:28 says, "Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty." Servant leaders invite people to come to Christ because this is how people will be saved. Servant leaders should be thirsty for truth and love themselves too. Jesus became human to live out what servant leaders can learn from him. Servant leader can learn from his love and suffering.

¹⁸ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 116.

Jesus' servant leadership expresses his relationship with God. Jesus is fully God and fully man and lives a life of sacrifice to ransom many people in the world. Jesus' relationship with God is fully secure and totally accepted. Jesus' is the Son of God and becomes the source of all life. Servant leaders too should have a good relationship with God and people because relationships offer protection and love. Servant leaders' connection to others is shown by this love and can change and grow life in Jesus. Their relationships should never be hateful but rather free from all unkindness and pride, showing the way toward truth and life. The relationships of the servant who is truly following God will mean they take the time to get to know others well and as good friends. John 15:15 says, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

Jesus' servant leadership expresses this by being a good example. Jesus' servant leadership set a good example by following His Father. Jesus, in John 13:15 says, "For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." Jesus set the example for the people as He teaches how to pray and honor God. Jesus also set a good example as he taught people how to live holy lives. Today too servant leaders can be good examples by showing holy and compassionate lives. Servant leadership should begin with knowing the needs of others because people need each other's help. It is very important that servant leaders should admit their own needs and help people see each other's needs. Jesus' servant's leaders express their own humanness and are able to face the reality of sin and death. But Jesus' leadership cannot be defeated because God's power is present to raise us to life and give

victory over sin and eternal death. Jesus' servant leader kind of relationship is not temporary but daily and ongoing and totally trustworthy.

Jesus' Servant Leadership Expressed by Forgiveness. An important part of Jesus' servant leadership is forgiveness. Even as Jesus was being nailed to a cross, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Jesus shows he can forgive his enemies; he prays for them to be forgiven. Jesus teaches people to forgive even those who sin against them. Servant leaders' forgiveness heals pain and frees anxiety. Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry writes, "As leaders who are seeking to help people grow and develop, we need a healthy capacity to forgive, redirect, and move on."¹⁹

Servant leadership can help others learn, grow and be able to forgive. Jesus' example of servant leadership is strong and kind and merciful to forgive those who sinned against him and others. When the woman caught in adultery was brought before him, Jesus showed great compassion for her by asking a difficult question to her accusers. After they had left, he asked her if anyone condemned her. "'No one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin'" (John 8:11). The Roman soldiers scourge him, mock him, and pound nails through his hands and feet but Jesus still prays and is able to forgive. Jesus' servant leadership sacrificed his life for human sin and cleansed the sinners from iniquity and death. It is a gentle leadership that forgives those who turn away from sin and accept his sacrifice. Such forgiveness requires Jesus' love and sacrifice.

¹⁹ Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group An Imprint of Thomas Nelson, 2016), 222.

Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry write, “Jesus taught forgiveness to His disciples, He practiced forgiveness with those who betrayed Him, and He willingly granted forgiveness to those people who participated in His death on the cross.”²⁰

Jesus’ servant leadership expressed by mission: Jesus Christ was sent to bring redemption to the world; as God sent Jesus that is Jesus mission. He served this mission faithfully and even though he suffered sorrow and pain in his life, Jesus never gave up his mission. Pastor servant leaders have as their mission to lead God’s people. Servant leaders should look at the high level of Jesus’ mission and service. Wilkes writes, “He led first as a servant to his Father in heaven, who gave him his mission.”²¹

God sent Jesus to bring good news to people. Pastor servant leader should serve and share the gospel to the people. As servant leader Jesus led his disciples to follow and share the good news. Jesus led as a servant Wilkes writes, “Jesus humbled himself and allowed God to exalt him. Jesus’ followed his Father’s will rather than sought a position. Jesus defined greatness as being a servant and being first as becoming a slave.”²² Burmese immigrants have come from a society ruled by a military dictatorship. They need to learn what it means to be Jesus’ slave both in church and in society.

Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership characteristics deal with the reality of everyday life and that is beneficial for Christian leaders. Servant leadership characteristics found a place in a leader as

²⁰Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus*, 224.

²¹ C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), 10.

²² Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 11.

Robert K. Greenleaf and Barbara Baggerly –Hinojosa note. Characteristics of servant Leadership include:

Listening

Servant leadership includes the importance of paying attention to what others are saying and showing interest. A good listener can be a good example to others. Leaders can encourage followers by encouraging them to listen to the inner voice. Greenleaf writes, “Listening is one of the best approaches to a healing attitude.”²³ I learned to listen to that inner voice; that is listening for the Spirit, and responding to God. It is listening to God and trusting the power of love. The leaders who learn to listen to God and other people grow in character. Christian servant leaders should be willing to listen to the voice of the Spirit of Jesus. A servant leader must learn strong communication skills and be eager to listen to others.

A good example of this is found in the story of Elijah - when he was taught to listen to the still small voice. He had to learn to listen. Then he knew that God was God, and was with him, and had an assignment for him to do. He thought that he was alone serving Israel during the terrible idolatry. But Elijah was not alone, God was with him. He realized that the small voice is God's presence. A servant leader listens and submits to God's direction. The servant leader can learn the voice of God leading his people. 1 Kings 19:11-13 tells us how God spoke to his prophet Elijah:

²³ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant: Reflections on Religious Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 95.

The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.’ Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”

In a way, I heard this voice when I heard God’s call to me to lead the Burmese Christian immigrants here in the US. It was not something I had in mind to do. God is the one who put the desire in my heart. For me, one thing is most important: it is to focus on God’s power and listen to him always.

Greenleaf writes, “There is an art to being a good listener, and some experience is available in helping people to learn it.”²⁴ A good servant leader listens; learning to listen helps lead others to work as a team to fulfill the mission. The values and vision of the servant leader then becomes a model to help the team heed the voice of other groups within the Church. Servants can be alert to others’ valuable ideas, opinions and feelings. John 10:28 says, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

Baggerly –Hinojosa writes, “Listening begins with attention and the search for understanding. Why is there so little listening? In the face of a different situation, the usual leader tends to react by trying to find someone else to blame. A true servant leader will listen first because true listening builds strength in others.”²⁵ A servant leader's listening attitude is important to show interest and love. This is especially important in the context of the Christian immigrants. Burmese Christian immigrants need good listeners and people who

²⁴ Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 244.

²⁵ Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics of a Servant Leader* (Self-Published: Lulu, 2020), 2.

will show concern for their stories, their feelings, and their interests. They have not experienced much of this in their journey. For example, are you listening? That is a great question servant leaders can ask collectively and help encourage people to listen to others. A servant leader who is a strong listener can build strong relationships and know the other's needs. A servant leader with a good listening habit will have an open heart and empathy and compassion for others.

Empathy

Servant leadership empathy is compassion, love, and the ability to recognize another person's emotional state. True empathy understands other people's feelings, stress, suffering as well as their joy. Again, we see the best example in the life of Jesus. Matthew 9:36 says, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." This is a story of Jesus wanting to be by himself, but when he sees the crowd, he puts his own needs second, and he teaches and feeds. Jesus sees the people lonely and lost and shows empathy.

When servant leaders recognize others' emotions, they show compassion that will encourage an understanding that the suffering is shared. This can bring others hope in the Lord. Burmese Christian servant leaders can learn love and compassion for others. Servant leaders should rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. For example, Burmese families who lose a member are grief stricken, but knowing how to grieve in a new culture can be very hard. It is a period of mourning and great loss, and experiencing this in their new setting can be painful and awkward. Leaders can help by focusing on eternal glory and not so much on worldly sorrow. The Gospel brings joy and peace, and the leader

can embody this reality for those who have lost a loved one. Romans 12:15 says, “Servant leadership empathy is nothing else but love for God and other people.” Servant leaders showing empathy is important and demands humility and kindness. Servant leaders take seriously the challenge of understanding others' needs and perspectives and valuing them with an open mind.

Baggerly –Hinojosa writes, “Actually, we can define empathy as the sharing of another person’s feelings. When we see other people hurting, our brains respond in a characteristic way. When we have empathy, our brains react to pain in others the same way it reacts to pain in ourselves.”²⁶ Servants leaders understand empathy is important, accept the pain of others, and show they are with them by giving them their time and attention. A leader can emphasize growth while recognizing the needs of the people. Servant leaders’ effective empathy includes building good relationships and good communication.

Leadership with empathy is essential in leading others to come back from hardship and experience the joy of God’s love. Servant leader self-management and self-development are also important for empathy; a leader can learn another person's feelings and emotions. Servant leader empathy for others can help make a good relationship between the team and others. It may not be easy to learn empathy but leaders can learn with patience and prayer. So, servant leaders can definitely use daily work communication to relate closely to the people.

²⁶ Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics*, 37.

Healing

Greenleaf writes, “Healing is an interesting word, with its meaning: to make whole.”²⁷ Servant leadership brings the gift of healing to build wholeness of people’s lives together in the team. The servant leader will see healing as serving and forming relationships with others. The leader who compassionately comes alongside others will help bring healing, build relationships, and nurture healthy development. The leader who does this will help bring genuine change and better understanding of the needs of others. A leader’s healing empathy helps the whole group mentally and emotionally.

Servant leaders' healing is the practice of caring about others and helping to overcome problems. Servant leaders are committed to express their own feelings, as well as listening and helping the team build resolution of painful emotion. For example, a broken spirit or family are part of human experience, during this the servant leader can recognize and help the healing process of meeting needs. Servant leadership healing processes can be applied to solve the problem of group conflict. Baggerly –Hinojosa writes, “Healing is to help make a whole. The search for wholeness is something shared by the servant leader. Learning to heal is a powerful force for transformation and integration in the workplace in the home. One of the greatest strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing one’s self and others. Servant leaders recognize that they have the opportunity to help those who have broken spirits and those who are suffering.”²⁸

²⁷ Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 92.

²⁸ Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics*, 17.

The servant leader helps with healing by opening their heart and having a comforting approach when someone has negative feelings. For example, Burmese Christian immigrants in West Michigan have lived in worry and feel the negative impacts of coming from long experiences of fear and persecution in Burma. Servant leaders should seek to support them and pray with them as well as serving them. Leaders should develop the gift of healing other people by listening with empathy and leading them to come closer to God. Servant leaders are people who others want to go to when they need help in their lives. Healing of emotions is important. Servant leaders should encourage emotional and spiritual health by praying and caring for others. It may not be easy to learn empathy but leaders can learn with patience and prayer. So, servant leaders can definitely use daily work communication to relate closely to the people.

Awareness

Servant leaders should be aware of what is important to the people and their feelings and what the situation of the people is. Servant leaders should be aware of strengths and weaknesses, not to work past them but try to learn to use the strengths and meet the needs of people. Baggerly –Hinojosa writes, “Servant leader has a unique self-awareness. A person can develop awareness through self-reflection, listening to what others tell us about ourselves, being continually open to learning, and making the connection from what we know and believe to what we say or do.”²⁹ Servant leaders are humble as they listen to others. It is important to hear how people struggle or rejoice. Servant leaders should be sharply awake and paying attention to their inner being.

²⁹ Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics*, 25.

Persuasion

Servant-leaders should be able to engage others and build up, not to break up relationships but to serve others. A servant leader is persuasive in bringing hope of building upon each other's work together. Servant leaders' persuasion is not authoritative leading; it's rather helping and encouraging the people. Servant leaders should not damage the relationships but rather build by persuading and inspiring others to come together in unity. Robert K. Greenleaf writes, "Persuasion also stands in sharp contrast to manipulation, guiding people into beliefs or actions that they do not fully understand."³⁰ The servant leader should prevail through the art of bringing about a changed mind while building good morale on the team.

A persuasive servant leader can advocate for the truth and can change people's thinking toward the right path. Servant leaders persuade the people from worldly ways of thinking to a biblical worldview; this is basic. The servant leader persuades the church congregations of what is good, which means bringing them into the Kingdom of God, where they can grow in holiness and live the life of a mature Christian.

Conceptualization

With conceptualization, servant leaders are processing the specific variables. For example, servant leadership sees how daily routines, plans and goals fit together. Servant leader's conceptualization is shaped by yearly Bible reading and daily meditating on the word. God reveals His purpose to the people, that is, the divine purpose from the beginning

³⁰ Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 36.

of time to reconcile heaven and earth in the name of Jesus. That conceptualization of God's plan shapes the leader's view of salvation for the world. Servant leader conceptualization sees beyond forming the concept to the plan, and then how to work out the ministry.

In the story of the parable of the Sower, the farmer sows the seed, lets it grow, and harvests it. The seed is the word of God and it is sown in the ground. But a good seed is the Son of God and bears good fruit. Matthew 13:38 says, "The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one." Servant leaders should live under the rule of Jesus Christ. We should be seeking God's power and guidance. This is vitally important for the one who would lead the Burmese Christian immigrants in West Michigan. They may have escaped the dangers of an evil government and a military that harassed them, and they may have left their status as refugees, but they have many new challenges. The wise pastor servant-leader will cast a vision for them that is like seeds planted that will grow and produce many harvests. The seed is rooted in the good soil. Servant leadership should be rooted and depend on God's power. The farmer puts in place the plan for a harvest. This takes conceptualization, and the vision must be communicated to the people.

Servant leader conceptualization moves beyond thinking of good relationships. What needs to be done for today and tomorrow and what will be done today. Servant leaders create plans for the Church, for example how to build small groups for leadership training and group development. This year a small group leadership training program, next year the ministry can improve the leadership training because the trained leaders can make others into good leaders. As the trainer learns and understands the biblical text, under the guidance of

the Holy Spirit, the trainer is then able to communicate this divinely inspired direction to the people Baggerly –Hinojosa writes, “Conceptualization is the ability to nurture others to dream great dreams. The servant leader seeks to nurture the ability to dream great dreams in him/her as well in others.”³¹ A servant leader who conceptualizes well can create vision and goals. Servant leaders should have the ability to see the needs of others. At times, the leader will go ahead to show the people how to walk the right path. By doing so, servant leaders conceptualize persuasion for the people so that they can observe it. Then they help build relationships within the team. These relationships can be formed and nurtured through practical acts of service, through small groups, and through the regular meeting of the larger congregation.

This conceptualized servant leadership should take into account the needs of the people. The leader must do so beyond daily routines. Servant leaders must be disciplined and practice the ministry of leadership. A leader should think carefully and focus on the future as well as on day to day ministry. It is also important that a servant leader should be able to set a goal with the group that opens future possibilities. Servant leaders must be positive and realistic to bring more people to Christ as the center. The servant leader's goal must be to bring other people to become good Christian leaders.

³¹ Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics*, 33.

Foresight

Greenleaf writes, “Foresight is the “lead” that the leader has.”³² The West Michigan Burmese refugee culture can think of the future to discern the next generation's good leaders. A servant leader helps and leads the people to have a better way of living. West Michigan Burmese refugees have two cultures; parents want to follow traditional culture, but children want to follow American culture. But now parents are learning both cultures in the U.S because raising families requires learning new cultures to help prepare future generations of servant leaders. This presents a big challenge for the leader who wants to serve. After the leader has provided the vision by conceptualizing the way forward, that leader must then implement the vision with wise and prayerful foresight.

Greenleaf writes, “Foresight is the inner resources of a leader that support self-confidence and build confidence in followers.”³³ Foresight is necessary to think about leadership development in refugee communities. The West Michigan Burmese understand and hold on to lessons from the past old culture. This is good and proper, but at the same time they must learn what is not helpful for them and guide their people into the right way. That is how they will build present and future leaders in this country. Remembering and preserving the good things about the culture they have left behind is good, but sometimes they would rather not learn the new culture and how to equip the people. Servant leadership in West Michigan involves changing old culture and learning new culture. Baggerly – Hinojosa says, “To have foresight means to have the ability to understand lessons from the

³² Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 32.

³³ Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 23.

past. A servant leader must have the ability to foresee or know the likely outcome of a given situation.”³⁴

A servant leader's foresight sees what is needed to make a better present and to prepare leadership to lead for the future. West Michigan Burmese need foresight to see the challenges of the new culture and specifically the importance of parents learning another language. It is hard to change culture to another new culture immediately, but now change in Burmese culture is developing, as they learn the new language and how to live in west Michigan. Burmese learn another language, for example, by going to English as a Second Language (ESL) class as well as learning in their workplace and from their children. Today's servant leaders in the refugee community must know Jesus is in control of today and tomorrow, and this part of their foresight helps develop better new culture in West Michigan. A servant leader can help people build on past culture to develop a better present culture, and then go on to develop a new culture to bring joy and blessing for the next generation of leaders. Greenleaf said “Foresight, seeing it before it hits you, is important to lay leadership. Again, the institute would invent its own approach.”³⁵

A servant leader must be able to look at, analyze the situation, and have foresight about the need to make decisions when needed. Foresight is the characteristic that helps the servant leader to think about the past and understand the need of the present and bring insight into the future. Barbara Baggerly –Hinojosa writes, “Foresight means looking at what is

³⁴ Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics*, 49.

³⁵ Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 244.

happening right now and comparing it to what has happened in the past and the result that came of it. At the same time, the leader has to project what will happen in the future.”³⁶

The story of Jesus in Mark 2 is a prime example of this. He left people who wanted him to stay and heal them, and went on his way. He saw that his Father has work for him to do in other places. Jesus the servant leader was here to accomplish the will of his Father eternally. His leadership revealed his authority to forgive sins and be able to heal disease. We see this as four friends brought a man to Jesus to be healed, lowering him down through a hole they had made on the roof of a house. Mark 2: 5 says, “When Jesus saw their faith; he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Stewardship

A servant leader takes responsibility for planning, managing, organizing and making resources available and using them well. This is stewardship. Paul talked about “stewards of the mysteries of God” 1 Corinthians 4:11-13, says, “To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, and we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.” Peter also said that we are “good stewards of God’s varied grace” 1 Peter 4: 10 Each of us should use whatever gift we have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. The Burmese immigrants here have received and continue to receive many advantages that they did not enjoy in the previous status as refugees. Educational opportunities lie before them; they now can own a

³⁶ Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics*, 49.

nice home, have a reliable job, and take care of their families. They can worship freely. And, for those who are Christians, they have been given the best gift of all—salvation and forgiveness of sin. These are blessings that they must appreciate and use to the fullest. The wise servant leader will help them be good stewards of this.

This is the most important thing servant leaders can learn: a stewardship of influence as living the love, patience, foresight, and trust they are called to fulfill. Servant leaders should know what should be done and should work with the teams to get it done. A good steward behaves like someone who knows he is a servant and who is accountable for caring for others. A good stewardly leader knows responsibility and does the work faithfully and is diligent, hardworking, and willing to take reasonable risks. Servant leader stewardship among Burmese refugees needs to learn deeper about how God wants us to strengthen our responsibility to help others and increase good use of resources.

Servant leader stewardship is shown by the one who is willing to take care and manage responsibility. For example, Noah was a good steward building the ark, finding resources and doing what God told him to do. Noah obeyed and built the ark to rescue his family and the animals from the coming flood. Another good example is Moses; he is a good example of a stewardly servant leader because he was given stewardship of the people of Israel to lead them out from Egypt and through the desert. Stewardly servant leadership is relying upon God and caring for the resources and the people with a humble heart.

A good steward servant leader sees a great trust placed in him to do the work with others. Baggerly –Hinojosa writes, “Stewardship is described as holding something in trust

for another. We all are stewards of those around us. We are stewards of our family, our colleagues, our friends, and our organizations.”³⁷

Servant leaders should know how to help the people manage resources, for example budgeting and saving money. Servant leaders' stewardship should be trustworthy for handling budgeting and finance. Servant leaders care for people well and help to serve other's needs. A steward-leader is responsible for helping the team to focus on achieving the team's goals. A servant leader uses collaboration and trust to better serve others by helping to increase teamwork. The servant leader helps others understand how important it is to teach others by modeling service and building capacity in the people. Stewardly leadership involves a servant leader's groups and individual responsibility-- helping them manage their lives on the right path, making shared goals with the organization. Servant leaders are responsible to be confident and courageous as they help other people. Stewardship servant leadership makes a commitment to serve the needs of others and have openness of heart using persuasion not control in leading others.

Servant Leadership Leading People Development.

Wilkes writes, servant leaderships' definition is “A servant leader serves the mission and leads by serving those on mission with him.”³⁸ Servant leadership development is about learning with and leading other people. Wiersbe writes, “Leaders are people--God's people – God's chosen people--chosen to do His will and His work and to help others to do His work.

³⁷ Hinojosa, *The Ten Characteristics*, 59.

³⁸ Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 18.

His promise is, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you"(Hebrew 13:5)."³⁹ Servant leadership involves building trust -- trusting God and other people. Max De Pree writes, "Trust begins with a personal commitment to respect others, to take everyone seriously. Respect demands that we first recognize each other's gifts and strengths and interests; then we must integrate them into the work of the organization."⁴⁰

The servant leader gives the opportunity to participate in leadership in the group. Burmese refugee leadership development is first helping one another. Burmese servant leaders develop by learning humility like Jesus. Wilkes writes, "Humility allows God to work in a person's life. Without humility God can have no place in a person's life because ego has become god."⁴¹ Humility's opposite is pride.

Servant leaders are making more disciples of Jesus Christ. This is what the Burmese Christian immigrant leader first needs to do is love God and other people. The servant leader is making disciples who are committed to serve and to follow with Jesus' followers. Disciple making meant sharing the word of God and training and teaching the people. Strong leaders' change the people's relationship with God. Allen Hadidian writes, "In Christian living three processes must be used: teaching, training, and transforming. Teaching involves knowledge and emphasizes the principles a disciples should know. Training involves skill and

³⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *On Being Leader for God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books A Division Of Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 22.

⁴⁰ De Pree, *Leadership Jazz*, 126.

⁴¹ Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 43.

emphasizes the practical things a disciple should be able to do. Transforming involves conviction and emphasizes the perspective a disciple should have.”⁴²

Burmese Christian immigrants' servant leaders must develop disciples who can teach. It is teaching helps develop understanding and communication of the foundation of both serving and relationship building. Servant leaders' teaching should be based on Christ as center; Jesus teaches and lives the love of God. Jesus leadership development in making disciples is clear, Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry writes, “Jesus was clear about what business He and His disciples were in. He called His disciples, not just to become fishermen, but to a greater purpose, to become fishers of men.”⁴³

Finally, a servant leader making more disciples is transforming the Burmese refugee community. Transformation comes as the refugees change and form new convictions and expands their perspective of Christian life.

Servant Leadership for Burmese Pastors

When Burmese pastoral servant leaders are humble we are more able to connect with our people amidst the challenges of being an immigrant. The Burmese immigrant culture is different in the USA in both conducting activities and making relationships. Language is culture and the immigrant needs to learn all about the new land and the new language.

Burmese Christians need to learn how to contextualize the Scripture; this brings deeper understanding of the text. Servant leader’s deeper learning of the Scriptures will

⁴² Allen Hadidian, *Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 81.

⁴³ Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, An Imprint of Thomas Nelson, 2016), 144.

contribute to success in the ministry. How will the congregation learn if the pastor-leader is not first learning how to contextualize the Bible. Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry writes, “A successful learner development process depends on the mutual commitment of leader and follower.”⁴⁴

Burmese Christian leaders need to reproduce in a new culture, making disciples who will be trained to make more disciples after them. Pastor servant leaders need to protect the flock and bring peace to their congregation. Christian leaders who listen to God are important because Jesus' followers need to learn to trust and obey. The servant leader's first teaching should be the word of God and led by the Spirit. Disciples need to change minds and hearts by being led by the Spirit. Burmese Christians need this Spirit and need to learn to allow him to dwell in their life and lead them toward God.

Servant leadership involves inner character, a change process that makes leaders more effective, leaders with more desire to commit to ministry and more willingness to serve. It makes leaders more like Jesus the Servant. The Bible shows that it is a daily commitment to the word of God. In the biblical context servant leadership is known as leading others to relationship with God, which is, leading others to conversation-changing life. It is connecting people to lifelong discipleship.

⁴⁴ Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus*, 196.

Chapter 4: A Boy in Burma

Introduction

My life as a Burmese immigrant mirrors the lives of many people in my congregation. The shared story is central to my pastoral leadership. In this chapter, I will narrate my own life as a witness to how living as a first-generation Burmese immigrant works for many in West Michigan. We, as a people, have faced many losses, including the loss of loved ones. We are reshaping our sense of family in a new culture, which challenges many of the customs of our original homes. But our stories shape how we live as Christians; it is my hope that in sharing my story, readers will discover how servant leadership emerges from a life of reflection and from a commitment to Jesus as we live forward.

Early Life in Burma

I was born in Burma, a small and troubled country where the majority religion is Buddhism. I grew up in a Christian family with five sisters and six brothers. It is joyful and blessed to have a big family in my life in so many ways. Our family was peaceful, and I made good friends with my siblings. We love each other and encourage and respect each other within the family. There are several reasons for this.

When I was a boy, I attended Sunday school class every Sunday. This was very helpful in my life, and has been an influence in my life till today. How did it lead me in this way? The Sunday school teaching instructed me how to live a good Christian life and the importance of memorizing Bible Scriptures that are useful for life. The first verse my Sunday

school teachers told us to remember was John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

This is the gospel in one verse. Memorizing Scriptures keeps the truth in our minds. It leads us to the good life found in God. Learning the Scriptures from the time I was a young boy helped me understand the importance of fearing and worshiping God.

Another thing I learned from my Sunday school class is how to respect parents. The teacher emphasized the importance of giving our respect to parents. It is respect for parents that creates the root for truly loving them. When parents feel respected, they love their children even more, and feed and nourish them to grow in all areas of life.

Parents

I learned servant leadership from my family, especially my humble parents. They are both willing to listen and learn from each other. The most important thing I learned from my parents is their humility. They were always willing to be kind and helpful; they never shouted in anger or showed pride with other people. They both attended worship service every Sunday. I liked the way they led and guided us children. They encouraged us to go to Sunday school and Sunday worship service and set an example for us. My father was a Christian leader in the Church; he worked as a deacon. He loved God and the people of the church, as well as his family. My father and mother were hardworking and cared for our family. It was not easy for them to feed and clothe and parent twelve children. Such a big family brings big requirements. They obviously needed to cook more food, get more clothing, and provide more bedrooms, but together they were able to lead us by God’s power.

Even though my family was big, when we were very young my parents could support and help us to go to school and to be good Christians. We now know that good parental love never ends and keeps building the family as long as it is together. This is good leadership, and it is reproduced as the family of origin grows up, and the children in turn have children of their own, and become an example in their churches.

The biggest losses I experienced were the death of my father and my sister in Burma. My sister had four children; when she died, they were left without a mom. She died when she delivered because the bleeding would not stop after the baby was delivered. The death made me lose a close relationship and caused me to feel weak. My hope was lost and it created a difficult situation in our family. The death of my sister was emotionally devastating and stressful because it caused great pain to me and made it very difficult for me to feel close with other members of my family. I found myself wanting to be alone, which only made me feel even lonelier.

An even bigger loss was when my father died. At that time it was my mother who suffered the most pain and loneliness. She fell seriously sick and one day she cried and cried. God was speaking to her heart, and she was learning how much God cared for her and for her life. After many years, she finally stopped longing for my Dad, but his death had difficult effects on the family. It was a surprise to me that my father's death could have such a big result in our family. I knew I would miss him, but I did not expect all the things that happened to us. The death of my dad changed our family relationships and brought much misunderstanding. The grief that touched our hearts because of sadness also touched our hearts by causing conflict. His loss made all things difficult and every action became a hard

thing to do. When my father died my two sisters and one of my brothers stopped going to school because of the financial problems that our family faced. My mom alone could not support us financially, and we could not go to school. This was a great negative change that caused social and emotional stress.

Our family income was so limited and there just was not enough to take care of what we needed. Every day I remember that, and my strongest and best love was for my father. But I cannot see him here on earth, and that is a misery in my life. At times I want to call my dad but there is no dad anymore to see and to love me. I knew that my father loved me so much; he was the reason I was able to go to seminary and can now do ministry. I try to forget the pain, but that is difficult to do. So my father's love continues to make me strong and able to do the work of ministry as well as now getting a seminary degree. Still, at the same time I remember him, and losing him remains very painful. That will always be a challenge for me.

Part of my loss was material things—when my father died we lost almost all our properties and animals. With him gone, there was no one who could take care of our family. My mother was alone to try to care for all we needed, because we were too young to help very much. Our animals died because we could not feed them. We had pigs, cows, and goats, and then some of our animals fell into a pit and died. We had to sell our farm because it was too difficult to do all the work. My mother could not take care of the farm all alone.

When my sister died, my family took care of me. They supported me and prayed for me. The church also helped me in the funeral service. Church members visited me and prayed for us. Our culture is that if someone has a family loss we visit and comfort the family. I learned what this really means—when my father died church members came and

stayed with us. Some church members prepared food for us and other church members stayed overnight—and not simply one night. They stayed for weeks. This is how our Burmese Christian culture takes care of each other. The church showed us how much they cared. They loved us by being with us in our sorrow.

When my dad and sister died we did some things according to Burmese culture and some Christian. These two things are not in opposition to each other. Our Burmese culture benefited from the Christian influence. People came to our house and prayed for us. We did worship services and ate together. My people stayed and slept with us for almost three months; that is our culture. Our friends practiced the Burmese way of comforting our family, but they also brought the genuine hope with them that can only come from knowing Christ and having the promise of resurrection. So it was a good mix of the Burmese way and the way of Christ.

Here in the USA it is quite different. People do care for each other when they face death and loss, but it looks much different than the Burmese way. Still, Christians everywhere will comfort each other in the ways of their culture, and I am learning this.

The most significant loss I experienced was when I felt that almost everything was lost—both family members and our farm. I did not have any hope for my future. It was painful and stressful in my life. Now I can see that God was preparing me for something more. After that loss experience, I am able to tell other people how hard and difficult the death of close family members can be. I also can help them know that even in grief; still God's love never changes. When a pastor has been through hard times himself, it makes his testimony to God's faithfulness more powerful. I believe that my seminary experience will

help me to understand my own loss and healing better, and also will help me keep on growing spiritually and emotionally so that when I comfort others, I will be able to do it in a way that helps them heal and trust more and more in God's goodness.

Now my family is scattered all over the world. With such a large family and with such great national strife, especially for Christians, we are separated from one another as a matter of survival. This means we are no longer together, which pains me, but it was necessary to remain alive. My family understands the biblical stories of exile and diaspora, yet my faith in Jesus holds me close to each of them even as we are spread to the ends of the earth.

Learning Discipline Through National Sports

When I was young, I liked playing sports, especially volleyball, soccer, and karate. My favorite sport is martial arts, and in particular karate. I started learning and practicing karate at a young age in Burma, studying it for more than seven years. I also opened my own karate school/club in Burma with more than seventy students and taught them every evening Monday through Friday. We all enjoyed learning and practicing together.

There was big news in 1997 about a karate competition and tournament. The whole country of Burma came together for the competition. I participated in this karate competition and won a gold medal, which was so important for me and for all my friends. One thing I learned from this love of sport is that I have self-discipline and good health. Self-discipline has helped me to learn new things in my ministry; what I learned about myself in sports is helpful to me now in the ministry.

Learning Faith from My Pastor

When I was young and living in Burma, my pastor was a strong leader and served the congregation and God faithfully. The pastor was the one teaching and preaching the good news at my church, but he did much more than that. He was a hard worker for the ministry; every month he did home visits house to house to pray and encourage the members. This tradition of house to house visiting by Burmese pastors is expected and welcomed by the congregation.

One thing I learned from the pastor's leadership example is faithfulness. Even through hardship like financial or health issues, the pastor was faithfully doing his ministry. Our Burmese congregation could not afford to pay enough Pastor's salary, which was a big challenge but I saw that servant leaders do the ministry continuously and faithfully anyway. He built a strong relationship with the congregation by doing the home visiting, relating to them and praying for them, and then preaching every Sunday in the worship service.

Government

Why is my family scattered all over the world? Because the government is bad at ruling in Burma. It was not safe to live any longer in Burma and most of the people ran away to India and Thailand to save their lives. That's the reason my family fled—we fled to another country to save our lives. It was tragic that my family now lives in different countries. Some live in the US, some still live in Burma and others live in Australia and Denmark.

Many Burmese people live as refugees and immigrants because of the government's oppressive authority—arresting and punishing and sending people to jail without trial.

Burma's military performed a coup that began on February 1, 2021; the democratically elected ruling party was the National League for Democracy, and the military violently destroyed the elected party.

Burmese people are suffering with poverty, isolation, and civil war. Because the military controls the government, the military announced its authority and started arresting people, killing some and sending others to jail. People were angry about the unfair takeover by the military and started protesting all over Burma. The Burmese government is totally different from what it had been in the past because the military authorities control the people. Because of bad rule and the misuse of freedom, it is no longer a developed country.

Young Adult in India

While I was a young adult I fled to India; Burma's bad government caused many people to run to different locations in other countries. It started the year of 1988 when the military took authority over the government. People ran to Thailand, Malaysia, and India. There is no more peace in Burma. Whatever the military wanted to do, they did to the people. The dictatorship is the opposite of faith and equally opposite the focus of my work on servant leadership.

For example, the government was commissioned to incite fear by killing animals, arresting people, and encouraging violence and chaos. Many in the West may wonder why they would kill animals. This is done to terrorize the citizens by taking away their livelihood. With no hope to continue farming, the people live in fear and have to flee to another place to save their lives.

I ran to Delhi, India, when I was about 24 years old because I was afraid and worried about my life in Burma. The lives of humans are not valued by Burma's leaders. We need to respect precious lives, and I feared for my own life. When I arrived in Delhi, I met some immigrants from Burma. I went to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office and registered as a refugee and began my new life away from my home and family.

Refugee Status

Now I was a Burmese immigrant under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) India. As a Christian immigrant there, I had several big challenges: food, medicine, and shelter were difficult to secure. As refugees it is not easy to manage daily living because immigrants look like strangers to the local people, and it is not comfortable. For example, there are safety concerns until receiving official status as a refugee; we are foreigners with no valid identification there to show to officials such as police officers. To be accepted as a refugee, a person needs to wait six months to one year.

The process for officially becoming a refugee is complex. In our case, the office gave us an interview appointment, and then we went to the office on the day to set up for the interview. The UNHCR asked many questions about what happened in my town in Burma. We answered every question in detail, because for us it was a real life issue. After the interview at the UNHCR office, the office recognized us as refugees and issued identification cards. That began a 9-year stay in India as a refugee. It is not easy to stay in a new place without having relatives with you. Journalist Sania Ashraf interviewed 36-year-old Chung

Dawi; he reflects on the pain of relocation, ““Going back is not an option—if I do, I will be arrested, tortured, and killed.”¹

Despite the delays and the frustrations of being a refugee, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees does many helpful things. One of these is to assist immigrants in finding jobs. Most of the immigrants will work in restaurants or factories. However, I served as the Pastor at Church of Hope and also as a Bible teacher at Delhi Theological seminary.

I Attend Seminary in India

I arrived in New Delhi in 2000 and moved to the US in 2009. While in India, I went to Bible College there. I studied more than seven years, completing my master’s degree while a refugee. The seminary studies were very helpful for my calling and ministry. The reason I studied at seminary was to learn the word of God and have a deeper relationship with God. In addition, I wanted to be pastor of a local church. It was helpful because I began to learn and understand theology, preaching, leadership, church history, and Christian doctrine.

Sometimes in my calling I feel doubt, for example why did God make such a difficult life in the refugee situation? “God, if you are there, help me,” I asked in my prayers. The refugee situation is not easy; it is a terrible life. There is fear, anxiety, worry, discomfort, and the feeling that no one loves me. However, through it all I know that God so loves me, that is why I am still happy to respond to the call today. As John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” That is how much God loves me.

¹ Sania Ashraf, “The Long Wait: Chin Refugees in India,” *The Diplomat*, Asian Life section, May 15, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/the-long-wait-chin-refugees-in-india/>.

One thing I am clear about is that even in difficult situations God is a provider for all. School in India was not easy for me financially because of the money exchange between India (rupees) and Burma (*kyat*). I needed to change my *kyat*, which was worth much less, to Indian rupees to be able to pay my school fees. It was hard for my family to support me at my college and seminary while I was at school, but they did.

I learned how great God is, and he is the source of all kinds of blessings in my life. Isaiah 41:10 says, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” I know I am nothing before God without God’s help from above, but nothing is impossible. Experiencing God’s power I am strongly following my calling with deep commitment.

Today I can do servant leadership as a pastor because God is with me to do the ministry to bring more people into Christ. My upbringing in a loving family and my story as a refugee forms the crucible for leading as a servant. I rely on Moses’s song in Exodus 15:2 say, “The Lord is my strength and my defense, he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” I studied in Burma, in India, and in the US. I finished my Master of Theology degree in India. My second and third bachelors are in the US. I studied at Crossroads Bible College of Indianapolis and Grace Christian University in Michigan.

Becoming Pastor and Teacher

The building blocks that strengthened my vocation and calling began during my middle-school years in Burma. While I was in Burma I was involved in the youth ministry leading and guiding the youth group. These youth groups focused on Bible study and met

each week to read and pray together. This Bible study helped form good relationships and increased commitment to do the ministry.

When I received the call from above, I wanted to go to Bible College and Seminary to learn theology. I struggled with my studies because of English language problems. But I studied hard and committed my time to study the word of God. God is helping me in my calling to become stronger and more certain about knowing and following God faithfully. My family prays every day for me, and they are also my strong encouragement for my calling and ministry today. Whenever I talk to my mother, she tells me that she is praying for me. When I hear her voice, I regain energy and am renewed in my will to serve in ministry.

I finished my seminary Master of Theology degree in 2008, and I continued working on my vocation and calling to be a pastor in India. At first, I applied for a secular job. Amazingly, while I was waiting for the response I received a call from a pastor. He asked me if I was willing to work as a pastor and Bible School teacher. I immediately said yes because I have a strong and clear conviction that God is calling me to serve in the ministry. I decided to follow whenever God wants me to go to the ministry. So, I accepted the job offer of the pastor and Bible School teacher position instead of the secular job. As John Neafsey writes, “Calls come to us, first of all, by way of the heart, and careful attention to the movements and inclinations of our hearts is one of the primary tools we have for hearing the inner voice that calls us to our destiny.”² Each person that God calls receives a gift to use for the glory of God. It is important for me down to the deepest of my inner heart to give glory and honor to God.

² John Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice Is Calling* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 1.

Even as I worked as pastor, my most powerful learning was to trust that God is very powerful in my experience. I know from my experience that prayer is powerful for connecting with God, and also with others as well. Prayer teaches and leads us to better communication and relationships with each other. John Neafsey writes, “Prayer is a way of focusing attention on our inner experience so as to establish a dialogue or connection with our inner self, to listen for messages that come to us from within.”³

When I began my ministry vocation in India it was very challenging for me. After completing my master’s, I was involved with the pastor Leadership ministry in India which was calling for me to reach out to the people. As for me God is always near me and leading the ministry because God gave me the gift of pastoral leadership ministry. Neafsey write, “The way of vocation has been called ‘the way of the burning heart.’”⁴

I cultivate the burning heart through discipline, especially devotional prayer and family prayer every morning and night. I am so blessed to have such a godly woman as my spouse who helps to lead our children in prayer and church worship. Prayer helps our family have good relationships, as we care for each other and live as an example for each other. We are known and loved by God and by our family, and this is even better than God alone—our strength and helper. This is what God wants us to do. It pleases Him when we care for each other’s spiritual needs as well as emotional and physical.

Sunday church worship service is also tremendously important for my life and for our family. Worship serves several good purposes: it heals the heart, directs our attention to our

³ Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice Is Calling*, 11.

⁴ Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice Is Calling*, 81.

loving God, and helps us realize God's power and love. We hear from God in worship. As pastor I give priority to worshipping God and the ministry of family and the church. The commitment I made helps me be joyful in ministry and strengthens my ministry in my congregation. I used to read the Scriptures twice a day, and I still maintain a regular habit of Scripture reading. By reading the Bible I nourish my spiritual life. I learned the importance of committing to reading the Scriptures because it is living truth, and it corrects and leads me in the right way. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

It is very valuable to read the Bible because it helps deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ. The relationship with Jesus Christ forms the believer's essential identity as a Christian. If I am unfamiliar with Scripture, I cannot really get to know Jesus Christ. Another way to say it is that reading and deepening my thinking in the Bible establishes a deeper connection with Jesus, because I am praying daily with meditation on the word of God. Reading the Bible is like eating food, and prayer is like putting in the flavor, leading to delight in following Jesus Christ.

Reading the Bible also opens the door to my deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus opened the door for the people to enter the inside mind, heart and soul. Revelation 3:20 says, Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. In the Bible eating together is a picture of fellowship, a ceremony of relationship. When I read the Bible I can understand the importance of Christian faith and know it is useful for teaching and training to grow in the knowledge of Jesus and a biblical foundation.

When I read the Scriptures it gives me more hope, faith, and love. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:13, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” And the writer of Hebrews adds “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Servant leaders understand how important it is to devote personal time to prayer, to Bible study, and to connect with God in worship. Newborn babies need milk to grow, and as they get older they require food to grow healthy. Similarly, prayer, Bible study, and feeding on the word of God help us to grow in Christ. Each day I set aside a quiet period for devoting my time to God daily and watching for God to be present in his power.

How Did I Respond?

It was important to respond to this call in my life because I know that God loves me and has plans for me for the ministry. It is my vision and my prayer—believing that I needed to go, not sit, in order to share the gospel to the people. After my father passed away, our family suffered and we were discouraged, sad, and unhappy. Yet when I talked to my mom, she said now is your time to go to Bible College and do more ministry. Even in that time, I knew that God was giving me the gift and the call to pastoral ministry to reach more people for Christ. I was and still am confident of that and my experience in personal relationship with God and sharing the gospel to the community is what I see in my life. I feel like I had an experience somewhat like Daniel in Daniel 9:20-22: “Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, while I was still speaking in

prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, ‘O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.’

The ministry is a clear call for me; I believe that by faith and trusting in daily life and the insight from the love of God. I am sure that knowing the power of God and seeing it in my life, I have a spiritual sense leading me closer to God. Every day I do devotions before planning or starting work. I have quiet time studying Scripture, reading and praying; this clear plan forms my spiritually strong relationship with God. My purpose for daily devotion time is to grow closer to God and build the foundation of faith. Daily devotion gives new hope and courage to be willing to follow Jesus Christ. Especially when I get up in the morning I start praying and reading the Bible. That is what I have planned to do daily and to spend that time with Jesus. I love daily talking and listening to the voice of God in my life. As I am sure that prayer is the human spirit communicating a vital relationship with God’s .In daily devotion I can praise, give thanks, ask for help, and share my hope and needs with the Lord. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6).

Settling in the USA and Into a Brand New Culture

I learned new cultural values, for example, communication. It is quite different in Burma. Here in the US when someone communicates, eye contact is important, but in Burma it is not necessary to have eye contact. In fact, the absence of eye contact shows respect.

Learning different cultures has helped me to be more respectful toward new cultures and to enjoy doing more cross-cultural ministry.

God did not discriminate against or for cultures or different faces; rather God loves everyone equally. Here in the US, a country which receives refugees, we see many different immigrant cultures that come together. This brings many problems, but it also gives us the opportunity to show the world how we can become one in Christ. This is at the heart of God's message of love to us: it is for the whole world. Romans 10:12 reminds us, "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him." There are no racial or ethnic distinctions in Christ, but whoever believes God is of one faith and unity in Christ.

Marriage and Family

I met my wife in Indianapolis. She had fled to Malaysia and lived a refugee's status like me. We got married in 2011 and our first baby was born in 2012. Like me, my wife also grew up in a Christian family in Burma. I learned that family is God's blessing because there is love, joy, and peace in our family. As the psalmist said, "Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3).

I enjoyed the love of God and His blessings in my family as a child and now as father and husband. It has been more than ten years that we have faithfully served the Lord together. Working together for the ministry is important because one can encourage the other when it is needed, and we pray for each other daily. I learned that pastoral leadership ministry is important in family too; in a healthy marriage when one fails the other can help

lift up. Being father and mother means to know how to love and help the children with their needs. Today my Doctor of Ministry program helps me to see more deeply into leadership in the church and family. Pastoral leadership in ministry means first sharing and praying with the family, and that brings more unity in the family.

Every night we have family devotions during devotions we can talk to God and our children. Reading the Bible and praying together brings the family into closer relationships. A very positive thing is my family supports my study, praying for me spiritually and physically; that is very powerful for me.

The Vacation and The Job

I lived in Indianapolis for almost seven years. “While there, I worked in Exodus Refugee Immigration Inc.”⁵ My job was helping newly arrived refugees. I worked there for nearly five years, welcoming the refugees when they arrived and after a few days I helped them to apply for food stamps, Medicaid, and find transportation and housing. After the application is submitted, the food stamp office sends a letter of notice for the day of the client’s interview. When they have their interview, I help them with transportation and translation. Then, when the interview is completed, after about a week they receive food stamp cards and Medicaid cards. Housing is also important for the arrival of the refugees, so,

⁵ Exodus Refugee Immigration, 2457 E. Washington Street, (Indianapolis), <https://www.exodusrefugee.org/>.

we set up an apartment for them. We also provided household items such as food, blankets, dishes, beds and tables and chairs.

I also worked as a church leader in Indianapolis at Falam Christian Church of Indiana. My responsibility was to help the church pastor in his ministry, for example by attending board meetings, visiting people in their home, attending church worship and cleaning the church building. This was my first US act of servant leadership; I did whatever was asked of me. I also worked as a Sunday school teacher and deacon.

Servant Leading

The transition from citizen of Burma to immigrant in India and the US was exhausting. I wanted to cry and felt sad all the time. My happiness was gone. The most painful thing was how it hurt to lose all hope. Mourning is like a sting and difficult to accept. I lost my concentration and experienced a difficult drop in motivation. It is a hard time to make decisions and I feel confused. I worried about my family finances and my low energy. It changed my appetite and sleep habits. I felt increased risk in my family. However, I saw and learned from God's power in my life that changed me to serve God. I learned from my experiences that I could trust God in everything. He was working on his plan in my life.

Time has passed and now my ministry helps me to learn that my past experience can help me tell others about the painful times and encourage others. I am happy that now my ministry helps me to know the love of God. Challenges and problems will always come, but the painful times are mostly over and past.

Learning From My Past and Teaching for Future

I learned from my past painful experience that suffering can create strength, and cause me to seek to be faithful in my ministry today. I see that the pain and grief do not really end but start to help me do ministry on the mission field here in Michigan. Back in Burma, I had several hard issues such as financial needs, a lack of good food, no clean water, a bad political situation, and a difficult living style, because the death of my dad and sister, combined with the military takeover, caused such a hard time in our family. But here in the U.S. I can have plenty of good food and a good living situation. When I do preaching and teaching, it can be a ministry of freedom and joy. I am so blessed and happy to continue my ministry.

However, knowing and remembering the love of God is what gives me the greatest comfort. Mine was a journey from fear, sadness, and hopelessness, to remembering God's love for me and His care for me. I can talk about it now in a way that summarizes a much bigger picture, and I can clearly see that the journey was longer than I wanted it to be. And yet it can also be easy to forget how long it was, and just go to the memories of seeing God's goodness again. But it is important to remember that truly it was a journey from a very low point back to high ground again. My emotions felt hard when loss happened in my life. I spent my time feeling lonely and helpless.

It was easy to feel depressed when I experienced separation. It was also easy to deny how I truly felt and pretend that everything was all right. My emotional experience was fear,

distraction, and loss of trust. Then, I felt guilt and more sadness. It was very shocking for me the first time I experienced loss because it is so difficult to accept the loss of a loved one. But now, as an immigrant, I found that the negative emotions did not go away. I felt uncertain about things and confusion in all activities every day. I felt it was a big volatile emotion and it was easy to feel anger and bitterness.

I started praying to God and reading the Bible. The first thing was I began to pray and pray and learn God's goodness and faithfulness. Reading the Bible regularly helped me with communicating my feelings, both to God and to others. This helped to release my painful feelings. I trusted God and spent more time with my family. I remembered what Paul said to Timothy about "enduring hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). I recognized that I live in the fallenness of the world. This world is not permanent; our permanent home is in heaven. So learning to live here with true hope and joy, in the middle of so much pain and disappointment, is a big lesson. All of life is a learning time for the follower of Christ.

My heart's deepest desire is to know more about God and His blessings, and that means to be with God always. I desire to be faithful and do more ministries, because I know that God chose me to be his child by His grace. God loves me and gives me grace to be strong in pursuing my desire and to be patient. I want to be the channel of blessings to others by my pastoral ministry. I want to help people to get the joy that they desire. I want to tell them the love of God. I want children to be brought to Christ through my ministry. I want people to know the only way to get to heaven is by faith and accepting the love of God.

Out of my deep grief, God called me to be a pastor and to hear the voice of God. This helps me in my ministry to be able to see more of God's goodness and concern. When I lose my way and feel my weakness, God teaches me again to go deeper in ministry and commit to his way. Reminding others helps me remember to trust God and know God's blessings. My ministry helps me so that I can encourage other people when I have a difficult experience. Ecclesiastes 3:1,4 reminds us, "To everything there is a season , a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." My time of loss as a refugee taught me that grief is a normal emotion and God can heal this sadness. The loss can change the way we can participate with other people in deep ministry. I suffered the "cold" of winter when I was separated from my family. But the springtime always comes, and with it new life. The seasons change. The grief and loss in my life has changed so that I can see the goodness of God's love and grace with a new start in the US.

When God called me to be the pastor, my desire was to make Christian leaders and good followers of Christ. Servant leaders are humble and willing to seek God's guidance. It is important that leaders should be devoted, dedicated, and set apart for His purposes. The church is holy and is a community set apart, because God is holy and there is no sin in Him and nothing can compare to his nature. God cannot tell a lie and it is impossible to make a mistake. Jesus said in John 14:6-7, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." I want to lead people to "really know" God.

My whole perspective on life is new. Therefore, even though the pain and difficult time I have, I know that I am justified by faith in Jesus and I have peace with God. My

sadness is now overcome because my old nature is gone, and I have new life in Christ. To put into words what God has done for me throughout all my difficulties and problems—including even persecution from a military government that harassed me and my family—is very difficult. Through Christ, I have overcome these problems. As Paul said:

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and so we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also boast in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces patience, patience produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Romans 5:1-5).

I am not angry with God over my pain because God showed me that He is my helper in every situation. The loss is not punishment because God's promise is to give us eternal life and to make everything work for our good (Romans 8:28). God is love and everything is in His hand. God knows all and He is everywhere.

Coming to West Michigan

In 2015, a Burmese refugee church in Grand Rapids called me to be the pastor, and I accepted the job offer. It is hard to accept the invitation to work as a pastor in another state. We already had a house and a good job in Indianapolis. However, my wife and I planned to have fasting and prayer for three days. So, we both started praying for three days with fasting. We finished three days of prayer but we could not make a decision immediately. After one week, we prayed again and finally we strongly knew God wanted us to move to another state and do ministry. As the prophet Habakkuk said, "For the revelation waits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, await for it; it

will certainly come and will not delay” (Habakkuk 2:3). We officially informed the church members that we would move and do pastoral servant leadership in Grand Rapids. We moved in 2016 to Grand Rapids Michigan; we lived in an apartment for more than a year. In 2018 we bought a new house here in Kentwood.

My family feels that it is a great blessing to live in West Michigan. They have good friends and relationships within the congregation. I enjoy my pastoral leadership ministry here in this Burmese refugee church. Now my ministry continues to strengthen and encourage my vision even more to reach the community to come together in Christ. I learned that my study in the D.Min program could be really helpful for me to see my congregation and my leadership in a fresh way. I’m learning about the importance of missiology and pastoral servant leadership in the local church.

My pastoral leadership calling is reaffirmed; I will continue pastoral leadership by listening to the voice of God and by faith continuing in the ministry. In the first year of my D.Min program I worried often about finances and family, and I thought that I could not continue my study. But I prayed that God would help me to be able to pay my tuition fees so that I could continue to study. In regular discussions with my wife, she encouraged me and told me to finish D.Min. By hearing her encouragement I regained strength and a clear reaffirmation of my calling to continue the ministry. Today I am here for my final year of D.Min and God is blessing me. I know I can focus stronger on my congregational ministry.

I learned that the inward calling through the Spirit is important for pastoral servant leadership. I know that God who calls me is leading and growing me to make a commitment to my congregation. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:16, says, “For when I preach the gospel, I

cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach.” I strongly accept God’s calling me to do the congregation here in West Michigan among Burmese. I am sure that God placed me to do the ministry, poor or rich no matter but I follow God’s leading. When Jesus sent the disciples to proclaim the Kingdom of God, Jesus said in Matthew 10:8, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, and cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.”

Giving back to Burmese refugees in West Michigan is my living into Matthew 8. I have a leadership group in the congregation. My leadership team and I have a meeting every two months and discuss what the important needs of the church are. The leadership team also helps with cleaning the church, greeting the people, and organizing worship services. My wife helps me with leading the praise and worship team every Sunday.

John Neafsey write, “God is the caller; the voice of vocation is the voice of God.”⁶ Servant leaders are called to develop the congregation’s ministry and listen to the voice of God. I am now seeing the completion of my DMin studies leading the way for how I should do ministry today. God calls each one of us to share the gospel to transfer people into new life. And His call to me is clear.

Servant Leadership in West Michigan During Pandemic

As a Burmese refugee living here in West Michigan, I have experienced many changes, adjustments, worries, stresses, and struggles. As a pastor, I play a key role in helping the Burmese immigrants become a new community in a new location and culture.

⁶ Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice Is Calling*, 6.

My experience is that working with and serving others is enjoyable because it challenges me to have a clear vision for my own new life. I must connect and be a connector by being a neighbor as Jesus described it. Because of that, I make sure to be thoughtful about my neighbors with phone calls, visits, and showing caring and interest.

In turn, the congregation assists me in serving others by giving advice and helping, including letting me know about who needs help. I have learned that I actually enjoy leading the church during a pandemic because I have more opportunity to pray and encourage other people. I myself learn the value of life and spending time with God by prayer and seeking to be closer to God. To use a practical example that relates to the current world situation, I choose to use face masks because that shows servanthood leadership. Those who wear masks protect others from Covid-19, especially when visiting a hospital or any public place, using masks makes me feel safer in the pandemic. It is good to protect family and the public by covering your face; that is a good way to help save lives.

Before the pandemic happened, I could not imagine how the world could change my situation. I know now that my servant leadership is important and attached closely to my life and church ministry, and it can be challenged by sudden changes in circumstances even in the US where I enjoy a better life. Pastoral servant leadership is important to prepare people to be ready to help each other as well as their neighbors, and carry out church ministry. I learned that my vision of leadership needs to include equipping myself and other people to adapt to change. I want to continue to grow my servant leadership and work for God's approval, no one else's, and to build better relationships with other people.

Servant Leadership Style Change In West Michigan.

How do we put into practice the things that will bring about the desired change in leadership style among the Burmese immigrant community in West Michigan? What are the steps we must take in order to do this? I find there are six primary principles we must put into practice.

1. We must put God first: Putting God first means giving to God before anything else. He must take the number one priority in everything. I know that without the help of God I am nothing. This is why I put God first in my life and always try to follow his direction. The best way to do this is by spending more prayer time with God in my daily life. Servant leaders always put God first and let his power lead and direct our path. A good servant leader is a good follower. Jesus set the example by being a good follower in obedience to his Father.

Servant-leader prayer helps to better relationships with God. As pastor I pray daily in my personal life. One change I have made from my previous practice is that first I pray and then I read the Bible. Previously, I first read the Bible and then prayed. Prayer helps me understand the importance of God. Another good change has happened for us in West Michigan. My family can spend more prayer time together daily, especially before going to bed. This is a big change. My kids love spending time together as a family. When they see mom and dad praying and sharing the word of God together, they learn from us. For example, we tell the love story of Jesus Christ. A servant leader's prayer is the joy of my life. Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Phyllis Hendry write, "Prayer is an essential act of the will that demonstrates whether we are really serious about living and leading like Jesus. Without

prayer, we will never be able to connect our plans and leadership efforts to God's plan for His Kingdom."⁷

Putting God first is putting our human ability behind and relying completely on God. Servants will take time to pray and be humble before God. The Lord completely changed my life when I began to know His power and love; this meant a change in my daily life by taking the time to connect with God.

2. We must put our followers above ourselves: Kathy Ettinger writes, "Pastors get calls in the middle of the night and all hours of the day when there is a crisis such as when a follower has a death in the family or goes to the hospital. The pastor may be tired or in the middle of something important at the church or at home but he/she will drop everything to help, console, and pray with the followers."⁸

The servant leader puts his people above himself to help them when they need help. As pastors, we give great importance to our congregation. That is what a servant leader does. For example, even though I am busy and need to work, if my people call me and ask me for help, I will leave my job and help my congregation. Servant leaders make the needs of the congregation their priority. One thing I remember is my wife said to me in 2018, "You are so busy with our congregation." But when I told her that it is my ministry, she agreed with me.

3. Give our fear to God: I have been afraid and worried a lot in my life. For example, even now I am concerned about my family's daily basic needs, and we have some health

⁷ Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus*, 283.

⁸ Kathy Ettinger, "Servant Leaders in the Church," Leadership Psych 485 (blog), Penn State, June 10, 2014, <https://sites.psu.edu/leadership/2014/06/10/servant-leaders-in-the-church/>.

concerns as well. What may happen with them? I am always thinking of my family life. But I know that God is my family's provision and by trusting in his promise to care for us, my fear will be resolved. Jesus told us not to fear and worry, rather to trust in Him (Matthew 6:25–34). This is also stated in the prophets, where God tells his people, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10). For people who lived with the fear of an oppressive government, and then the fear of being refugees, learning to live without fear is a big step. Fear can set the situation free with love.

4. Put love at the heart of ministry: Blanchard, Hodges, and Hendry write, “What does love have to do with leadership? The simple answer is everything. Love is a core of leadership, especially for a Jesus-like leader.”⁹ I learned that loving people is not a choice because Jesus tells us to love one another. I love my family because family is God's blessing. I can spend more time with my family because I love them. That is the great thing happening in my life as a servant leader. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34).

Servant leadership loves not pride and fear, but will value holding each other accountable. A servant leader will promote trust among everyone in the community. Servant-leader love builds peace and confidence. This leads to love, which casts out fear. Fear is replaced by trusting and knowing God. Blanchard, Hodges, and Hendry write, “Leading like Jesus is leadership based on love. Leading like Jesus will always mean putting love into

⁹ Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus*, 211.

action in various ways.”¹⁰ Servant leadership loves to speak the truth and help people understand how to love each other.

I love helping people. When I do so, my life is joyful and happy. I feel that the Scriptures come alive and I am truly leading my family in the way God wants me to. Everyone finds it easier to show kindness to each other. It is living out John 13:34. Jesus gave us the command to love each other as he loved us. First he washed the disciples’ feet; then he died for the disciples, and also for us. It is not likely that we will be called to die for another, but it is possible. What is much more possible is that we can serve each other as Christ served the disciples.

In Ephesians 3:16-17, the apostle Paul writes, “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s people.” Blanchard, Hodges, and Hendry write, “What we received, we can give away to others. So we who have received God’s love can share that love with others. And the power of God’s love changes everything”¹¹ This is the kind of love that real servant leadership will help establish.

5. Growth: Disciples begin to grow in new ways as they escape fear and learn a new culture; they begin to learn about servanthood. As a pastor and servant leader in West Michigan I see the disciples grow. That is another big change in my life. From 2017 to 2020, I had a children’s ministry in my basement. Every Friday night I taught about God’s love and

¹⁰ Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus*, 213.

¹¹ Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus*, 214.

salvation. We hosted between ten to fifteen children; among them were five who received Jesus Christ as their personal savior. My prayer for them can be found in 2 Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”

6. Leading as a Servant: how to be a strong and transformational servant leader in Christ’s body. The servant leader’s first lesson is to follow. He learns his first lessons from God about accepting the call. He learns that following means serving. Then gradually the serving becomes servant leadership. The leadership is always in the service of Jesus and his disciples. And it always brings transformation.

The pastor servant-leader focuses on Burmese Christian immigrants growing in Christ. I see my life changing for the better because I continue to learn the word of God daily. And what I find in my study of the Bible is the importance of God’s’ love. I found myself needing to read daily and started by reading everything the Bible said about love. I studied Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” I learned how to love God and people and that began changing my life in West Michigan. Daily Bible studies give me life. I set aside time daily, study the Bible every morning and day, and use it in practical ways while loving other people. I prepare a separate room and spend time with Bible studies and prayer daily. As Blanchard, Hodges, and Hendry writes, “God loves you. He created you perfectly to accomplish a specific purpose. Scripture also teaches us how to treat one another, how to love as we have been loved, and how to lead like Jesus.”¹²

¹² Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead like Jesus*, 284.

Servant-leader transformational change happens when the Holy Spirit works within the person. David Delp writes, servant leadership is "... about serving and encouraging positive change and spiritual empowerment in the lives of those we love and lead."¹³ The change I see happening in my life is in serving and encouraging others. Burmese Christian immigrants need help and encouragement from their servant leader to focus on the ministry in West Michigan.

¹³ Delp, "Being and Becoming."

Chapter 5: Transformational Servant Leadership Development

Introduction

The goal of the leader, according to James Montgomery Burns and Victoria Slavic, is transforming servant leaders within the group. Wesley Shotwell and Jeanine Parolini emphasize the importance of vision for this desired transformation. For the servant leader, such transformation must include a commitment to carry out Jesus's words in the Great Commission. C. Gene Wilkes notes that servant-leadership requires patient and empathetic listening skills. Before any transformation can take place among the group, the servant leader must also experience that transformation personally. In short, good leaders are good disciples.

What Transformation Looks Like

Burns defined the term transformational as a process of change. He wrote “To change is to substitute one thing for another, to give and take, to exchange places, to pass from one place to another.”¹ Slavic says, “Transformational leadership is an approach in which a leader inspires and motivates team members to create positive changes within an organization.”²

¹ James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 24.

² Victoria Slavic, “What Is Transformational Leadership? (And How to Lead With Motivation),” Indeed Editorial Team, December 8, 2021, <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/transformational-leadership>.

But transformation for the sake of change itself is not always a good thing. What is needed is good and wise transformation. For this to take place, we need the right kind of leader. We need someone who is a servant leader, who keeps in mind the best interest of everybody. Transformation leadership is a change to a better way of life for the entire community. Transformational change means that servant leaders reshape the process of discipleship and leadership. Transformational servant leaders help followers grow and develop to be responsible for being a group member and being committed to the group's goals. Transformational servant leadership is a process that changes and transforms people into good leaders. Burmese Christian immigrant servant leaders work to bring about intentional change in their community: the congregation.

Who is transformed?

The Christian servant leader of immigrants will help develop character as expressed in relationships as well as internally in their own lives. Servant leading is a process that changes and transforms people; the leader influences followers to accomplish the long and short term goals shared by the group. For example, servant leaders transform people in order to change something into something else, for example changing a shabby and neglected house into a neat and cheerful and comfortable home. Another example; the servant leader transforms a shabby and dirty person with a bath and a suit and a new haircut that changes a person's appearance and grows inner joy. For example, I received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior -that gave me inner joy and peace in my life. Old things are passed away and new life comes to my life; that is divine change. Servant leaders can enjoy the love of God which means hearing and knowing and feeling the sovereign love of God.

Burmese Christian immigrant servant leaders can lead culture change and develop new culture in congregations of the US. Christian immigrants can see new things and new nature, for example new houses, new jobs, and new churches, as well as new relationships, new communities, and new families in the US.

Transformational change

Transformational servant leaders have vision and empathy. They are open to new change and new learning. They listen actively, and they take responsibility when things go wrong, protecting their followers from taking or placing blame.

Vision: Transformational servant leaders develop new vision for renewed community, human nature and family love. The leader understands the nature of change processes and this comes from a deeper understanding of vision and culture. Transformational servant leader ideas lead to seeking a more dedicated life individually and as a community. Servant leader's ability to innovate is the ability to think and plan the future with fresh imagination. Christian leaders see reality clearly, reveal their vision to others, and develop their ability to see the needs of others. Wesley Shotwell says, "Vision is the ability on the part of the leader to see the big pictures, the complete package, and what things will look like in the future."³

Empathy: A transformational servant leader's empathy will help him or her be attentive to other people. This will help the leader become aware of their real needs, and they can better see how to provide meaningful assistance. A leader seeks to understand how other

³ Wesley Shotwell, *The Power of Being a Servant* (Keller, TX: Austin Brothers Publishing, 2011), 32.

people feel and is willing to help them in humility. Servant leaders connect with others and share this value of human commitment.

Christian servant-leader empathy is the ability to see others' needs and validate them with love. Servant leaders as followers of Christ can be good witnesses to help people with Christ-like empathy, not mere tolerance. Burmese servant leaders can focus on understanding others' feelings and needs. Burmese immigrant leaders' empathy should start with loving and then carry on growing the teams. A leader can listen and is willing to comfort and help the congregation. For example, a parent's empathy for their children starts with love, feeling and understanding their needs. Servant leaders' empathy improves emotional health, within the team as well.

Openness to new thinking: Transformational servant leaders are constantly open to new ideas and new things. A leader seeks new opportunities to try different ways of developing and involving themselves. Servant leaders allow for an open mindset to see changing the ways to meet the needs of others. Openness to new thinking means the leader has to have humility and courage to take on new responsibilities. When the Christian leader opens his or her heart, then becomes receptive, it makes an opening for inspiration and God enters into the open mind and new thinking.

Commitment to Active Listening

Transformational servant leaders inspire the group; team members are encouraged to share their ideas and concerns with each other. Wilkes says, "Listening is the easiest way to understand the needs of people who are in ministry with you. Listening is hard work, but it

leads to opportunities to serve those whom you have recruited.”⁴ A leader commits to actively listening to their team members and can be seen by others to show empathy and understanding and respect. It is important for servant leaders to be good listeners, to be open minded, and to share their thoughts without fear and worry. The servant leader needs to commit her or his life to active listening to reflect a personal depth of faith and living.

Burmese immigrants have lived in fear and stress for a long time. The wise leader can address this fear by demonstrating openness and trust. Christian immigrant servant leaders who fear God gain wisdom and understanding as they show people how to listen to him and to each other. To actively listen to God, the leader’s heart must first be open and willing to receive His word. God’s words are active and alive to help the people who listen to be close with Him. When Christian leaders commit to the people and people come to understand that they are important, the result will be better relationships and growth.

Willingness to Accept Responsibility

Servant Christian leaders should take their role seriously and be willing and faithful to continue in obedience. For example, leaders can be expected to take seriously the needs and feelings of others, helping them when their ideas fail. Transformational servant leaders must be eager to respond to other team members. Christian leadership accountability is submitting with the heart of Christ to see other people's experiences of life. Servant leaders accept the job and act faithfully and responsibly to see clearly and have a good attitude, full of grace and forgiveness and readiness to take others' burdens.

⁴ Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 194.

Burmese immigrant servant leaders should respond with a willing heart to lead other people. For example, servant leaders are not just helpful; they know how to protect the group from failure or going down the wrong path. Servant leaders take responsibility to guide and protect the team as the team learns empathy and takes responsibility for taking on new tasks.

Who Is Being Transformed?

The transformed leader is both leader and group member, and this dual role will help the leader understand the dynamic of relationships. A servant leader who grasps this will provide guidance for reaching out to others and help them live up to the vision. Christian leadership involves leading the congregation to fulfill their desire of following the root model of Jesus. Jesus himself transformed by changing and following his Father God, and also Jesus transformed disciples to carry the gospel over the world. James Macgregor Burns says, “Leaders lead, followers follow. Leaders dream the dream, take the initiative, connect with followers, and start the action.”⁵

Jesus’ Transformational Servant Leadership

Jesus Vision for the Kingdom of God: Jeanine Parolini says, “Transformational servant leadership has the ability to cast a collaborative moral vision while actively caring for those participating in moving the vision to reality.”⁶ Jesus' vision is totally unique because he wants to bring all nations into the Kingdom of God. Leighton Ford said “The Kingdom which he proclaimed and embodied is for now as well as for the future. He himself said that

⁵ James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 171.

⁶ Jeanine Parolini, *Transformational Servant Leadership* (Milton Keynes, UK: Xulon Press, 2012), 13.

the Kingdom had drawn near Mark 1:15.”⁷ The Kingdom of God is where people can find peace and love. Christian servant leaders can make people in God's Kingdom love and spread the love around the world. The Kingdom of God is the living out of redemption on earth. Wilkes writes, “He was sent to bring salvation to the world as God's sent one. He served that mission by living as the suffering Servant Messiah. This mission was everything for Jesus. It was his purpose and direction for all he did while on earth including his death.”⁸ Burmese immigrant servant leaders can serve that mission, helping and bringing the good news to the people. Servant leader vision helps bring unity with the congregation.

Wilkes also says, “Leadership begins when a God revealed mission captures a person. This person turns leader as he becomes servant to the mission. Vision is a leader’s unique rendering of the mission.”⁹ Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God begins with seeing the people's need for repentance. (Mark 1:15) The time has come, he said. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news. Jesus is a faithful servant leader leading the righteousness of God Kingdom to set people free from sin. Allen Hadidian says, “God’s first desire for men is that they came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He desires that all men repent and be following with Him. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”¹⁰ For example, God wants the people not to depend on other things, rather to know and believe the truth about Jesus Christ. Changes can

⁷ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991), 30.

⁸ Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 9.

⁹ Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 19.

¹⁰ Allen Hadidian, *Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 21.

disrupt our lives, and distract us from Jesus. For example, we might experience a job loss or relationship breaks up. Servant leaders see changes that happen as opportunities to come together and learn from each other.

Announcing the Kingdom of God, Jesus proclaimed the good news to the poor with unconditional love. Luke 4:43 says, "But he said, I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." Jesus' transformational servant leadership is inviting all people to enter into the Kingdom of God. Luke 8:1-2 says, "After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary called Magdalene from whom seven demons had come out. Jesus has power and authority to cast out and heal demons and any diseases." Jesus leadership showed both word and action that make powerful connections to bring people into Christ. Jesus transformed people's lives and made peace and new hope. Laurie Beth Jones says, "Jesus said he came from heaven and was going back to heaven. He came to teach us what heaven was like and how to bring it about on earth and, more important, in us."¹¹ Jesus transformed sickness and demon possession, healed the blind and lame and gave new life. Jesus transformed sinners to a new life and a new relationship with God. Jesus transformed small disciples and bigger disciples to become good followers. Jesus changed old things and new things to look like the Kingdom of God.

Sometimes this can mean being transformed as in a small ministry group. Deacon groups learn the importance of ministry in the congregation. They know their responsibility

¹¹ Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus C.E.O* (New York: Hyperion, 1992), 17-18.

is to help others meet needs. Sometimes it means people deciding to lose weight and start exercising to become healthier. Successful Burmese servant leadership ministry takes the first steps of building relationships and working together. They know the new life and freedom from worldly loves and they come to Christ and lead others to him.

Jesus Makes Disciples

“Mathew Lynch says, “Transformational leadership encourages a feeling of empowerment in all followers.” Jesus’ ministry begins discipleship by calling the disciples to “come follow me.”¹² Christian servant leaders cannot escape from this calling to follow Jesus Christ. This involves Christian leader's commitment to lead other people and follow the way of Jesus faithfully. Jesus called the first disciples to do what he did and continue his ministry. Mark 1:16-18 says,

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him. For three years they spend their days with Jesus, watching and listening and learning and following.

Calling to Be Disciples

According to Wilkes writes, “The word disciple means learner.”¹³ Christian leaders' disciples know Jesus as their teacher and follow him as their master. Jesus calls disciples to

¹² Mathew Lynch, “6 Reasons Why You Should Become a Transformational Leader,” The Advocate, March 12, 2016, <https://www.theedadvocate.org/6-reasons-why-you-should-become-a-transformational-leader/>.

¹³ Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 76.

obey and follow him in the way of God. Jesus teaches and empowers disciples to be servant leaders first. Jesus' first words - follow me-- invite everyone to follow Christ. Burmese immigrant servant leaders' should be committed to following Jesus Christ. Servant leaders are called to obey and lead the way. They should be willing to invite and connect other people to the ministry team. For example, my wife and I are doing Sunday school ministry at our house every Sunday morning. We invite the children to come and join Sunday school class. We also do transportation for all the children. We pick them up from their home and when Sunday school is done we drop them back home. This ministry invites them and works with their families to make good relationships and make disciples. Children learn the word of God and enjoy hearing the words that lead them to come to Christ.

A disciple is a witness: Christian servant leaders' disciples are the ones who see and tell the goodness of Jesus Christ. A disciple witnesses the gospel and shares the good news to others. Jesus witnessed the love of God and made disciples and now other disciples can reproduce. J.Dwight Pentecost says, “The disciples were going with the Gospel that is good news. The good news was the good news that Christ had come to save sinners.”¹⁴ Acts 5:32 says, “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Jesus teaches the disciples. Wilkes says, “Jesus constantly taught his disciples. He trained them about the nature of the Kingdom of God Matt13. He explained his mission (Mark4:35-41). He performed miracles to teach lessons about his Kingdom (Mark 4:35-41).Jesus even instructed his displaces on their attitude about being his followers Luke 17:7-

¹⁴ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 109.

10.”¹⁵ Jesus teaches disciples not to worry and to trust God and Jesus. The Christian leader is processing and learning the word of God in her/his heart, and then becomes willing to make others into good followers of Christ. Burmese immigrant leaders can learn to love people the way God loves people. A servant leader’s learning involves listening to what others are saying, and what they need. For example, when a baby is born, start carrying, start learning walking, eating and develop physically. Servant leaders can learn by giving others what they have which also leads to participation in the group activity. Mark Altrogge observed, “A disciple is a student. An imitator. A learner. A lifetime learner.”¹⁶

Jesus also teaches his disciples how to pray so they can have a relationship with his Father and with Jesus. Christian servant leaders of immigrants must be committed to be good teachers and lead the people into fellowship with Christ. Christian leaders are called to witness this powerful gospel to others. Luke 5:32 Jesus' mission included preaching of repentance for internal change of mind and heart. It is change of behavior and turning to God. Jesus is willing to forgive whoever repents and accepts the love of God. So repentance has results in the fruit of life, joy, peace and accepting God's provision.

Jesus mission on the Cross: It is to forgive the world of its sins, as Jesus Christ was willing to die for all. The cross makes peace between God and humankind. The cross took away our sins and shame. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed

¹⁵ Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 196.

¹⁶ Mark Altrogge, “The Powerful, Life-Transforming Lessons Jesus Taught His Disciples,” Church Leaders.com, January 10, 2020, <https://churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-articles/368752-the-powerful-life-transforming-lessons-jesus-taught-his-disciples.html>.

down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

Inspirational Motivational Servant leadership

Michelle Ray says, “By definition, inspirational motivation involves two key components. First, a leader must be clear about his or her vision. Secondly, a leader needs to express his or her vision in a manner that excites and drives higher levels of performance.”¹⁷ Transformational inspirational motivation in Christian servant leaders can help spark energy and vision to seek the goals with confidence. Christian leaders should have clear goals and commitment. An inspired and motivated servant leader is important because the leader seeks honesty and integrity in the group and motivates the others to seek those too. The Christian leader's ability to share a vision and mission will connect other people to the work and to each other. Transformational inspirational servant leaders are powerful examples to others to motivate and inspire them. They give strength to those they lead.

Christian leaders build relationships with the team members; they are interactive and inspire the team to help each other. Inspirational servant leaders encourage fresh thinking and experimental action, which means the teams, can innovate. For example, Noah’s leadership as described in Genesis 6 was inspired. When God told Noah to build the ark, he obeyed which saved his family and the animals. He did something he had not done before, and he did it with people mocking him. People mocked and laughed at him for building it, but Noah

¹⁷ Michelle Ray, “Transformational Leadership: Inspirational Motivation,” Michelleray.com, April 15, 2020, <https://www.michelleray.com/tag/inspirational/>.

faithfully built the ark. When God sent the rain from the skies his family was saved. In Genesis 7 and 8 – Noah builds an ark and Noah and family take refuge from the flood. Noah: Genesis 7:7 says, “And Noah and his sons and his wife and his son’s wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood.” And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons’ wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. God told Noah to build the ark to escape from the flood and save lives; because God said he would send a flood to cover the earth. Noah and family enter into the ark. But all who are outside of the ark perish because they did not obey God. Christian leaders need the Spirit's inspiration and guidance and leading on the right path to follow. And they need to obey the Spirit's leading.

Inspirational motivational leadership comes from the Holy Spirit’s following humbly where the feet of Jesus lead. The Holy Spirit wants Christian leaders to be motivated and seek His guidance and leave their old nature. Christian leaders motivate others to learn by practicing total surrender to God. The Spirit helps and encourages them to be able to preach the good news with joy and a good example, and motivate the people. Christian leaders can be freed from fear and motivated and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 41:10 says, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Transformational Leaders Build Relationships Among Burmese Refugees

Transformational leadership will build relationships by a continued commitment to growth and learning that empowers one another. Burmese Christian immigrants in the US can now build their houses and live in peace in community with each other. They also plant

gardens in the community, often in their own house or yard and produce fruits. They get married and have children. They have their own church services and ways of praising God.

Immigrants live their lives and enjoy freedom and peace in the US. For the Christian immigrants, building family love means having commitment to each other within the family. Parents come from a culture in which the family will provide all the support and care for their children. West Michigan Burmese Christian refugees are building more that become well processed. Servant leader's build and learn new cultures and good relationships with God and others help develop. A servant leadership of building the people means helping others who need to be restored. Romans 14:19 says, "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." Burmese immigrant leadership now becomes the pursuit of the feeling of fellowship and sharing common attitudes, interests, goals, and helping others. A servant leader inspires the team and encourages them to do the ministry, always developing and building strong relationships. A servant leadership understands it is important for the people to have clean and strong connections. A leader must be committed to help perform the work with integrity. A servant leader should focus on building and developing success for the group.

We see examples of "immigrants" throughout the Scriptures, and often these situations were very bad experiences.

The first case we see was one of "exile." Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden for their rebellion against God. They had lived in the garden and enjoyed fellowship with each other and God. They had joy and peace. They built friendship and love for each other (Genesis 3:22–24). And yet, after they were sent out of the Garden, they could

still have fellowship with God. He would show them how to make a way even though they had left their home. This is God's leadership of Adam and Eve. They were still his children. He even cared for Cain by putting a mark on him (Genesis 4:15). This shows how God never stops loving his people.

The second case we look at is the example of God calling Abraham to bless all nations through him (Genesis 12:1-3). This is not exactly a case of exile, but God's faithful plan and purpose is to bless Abraham's descendants which means that all the families of all the peoples on earth will benefit from the promise. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your seed I will give this land" (Genesis 12:7).

Another example of immigrants in the Bible occurs with the exile of Israel. This is where we can see a similarity with the current immigrant situation in West Michigan. It is not because of their "rebellion against God" that the Burmese are here, but for them the refugee situation is in many ways similar to Israel's exile in Babylon; both groups had to learn to live in harmony with God and the new community.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God tells his exiled people, "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce" (Jeremiah 29:5).

- a. The people worked their own land: Israel expected to return, but not for a long time. So they continued to plan for their own land where they could support themselves.
- b. They had liberty: Even in captivity, Israel had the freedom to live on their own, build their houses, have children and multiply. And God expected them to live in peace with the Lord.
- c. They planted gardens, trees, and vineyards, worked hard, and ate the fruit of their labor.

Jeremiah told them, “Seek the peace of the city... for in her peace there shall be peace for you” (Jeremiah 29:4-9)”. No matter what situation the people found themselves in, and no matter where that situation took them, God did not abandon them. Servant leaders can show their immigrant churches that this is the heart of the God we serve.

Burmese immigrant transformation occurs here in the U.S. Their life changes, for example they can have a garden in their backyard and plant seeds. They have peace and joy here living in their house. For example, my wife and I planted apples, cucumbers, and mustard seeds in our backyard, which is really lovely and fruitful for our family. We can eat organic vegetables that we plant. We also bought a good house which is a blessing from God, and beautiful to live in for us. There is peace, love and joy in our family. We love each other and care for each other. We can worship and do ministry for my congregation and help them to experience the deeper love of God.

Transformational Servant Leadership In Burmese Culture

Transformational servant leaders are helping change the Burmese Christian culture by teaching them to adapt to new things. For example, they have come to understand the laws in the US much better. When they arrive in this country, most Burmese Christians know very little English and know nothing of the new culture. Christian leaders can see change happening because now they can speak conversational English. This is especially helpful because language is culture.

Church growth and technology: Burmese immigrant churches experience a significant difference from faith in Burma. We have access to owning buildings, utilizing technology during the pandemic, and gathering freely without fear. This is a significant

change from our homeland. Burmese congregation culture change happens in church life. Technology changes how we learn and relate and even how we worship. Computers offer power point at church services, congregations did not have this in Burma. In the US, Burmese worship services can use the internet, which allows exposure to different worship styles, and causes shifts we do not even notice sometimes, for example in how we connect to each other. Communication is easier here, for example, Wi-Fi is available 24 hours and Christians can better connect. Wesley Shotwell says, “Jesus changed everything. Jesus still changes things. He changes individuals, cultures, and social structures. Therefore, as servant leaders following the example of Jesus, leading and managing change is what we do.”¹⁸

Language: Most of the Burmese immigrants can now speak some English. When they were newly arrived in the US, most of them did not know how to speak any English. How did they learn to speak and read in English? Some Burmese Christian immigrants learned at their workplace. They accomplished this by hearing from their co-workers at the company. They had a real motivation to learn how to communicate at work. But this is very difficult. Sometimes they go to English is as Second Language (ESL) classes and learn how to write and speak in English. The children have it easier. They learn from school. That is really effective and helpful for the family. For example, if the parent does not understand reading bills, or can't receive phone calls of visit the hospital, their children can translate for them. Children attain fluency in English much more readily than their parents, or course. But the servant leader can play a role in this. Servant leaders can help Burmese immigrants learn a new culture by becoming proficient in English themselves. He or she understands what the

¹⁸ Shotwell, *The Power of Being a Servant*, 103.

family is going through in trying to learn English, and they understand the importance of it. They can play an important role by encouraging the ones who struggle with language, and then can help teach some English as well. This is a part of servant leadership.

Mutuality and Connection: Burmese Christian immigrants can have fellowship together, which for our church, for example, means three to five people have fellowship and prayer together. Previously, fellowship between the pastoral leaders was hard because each pastor is busy with helping their own congregation. Our transformational leadership culture is changing for the better, which means more open time to meet with and encourage each other. The pastoral leaders have made this time a priority because they understand its importance. The Burmese pastors understand each other's struggles because they are going through many of the same things. And they are coming to understand that their congregations will see them leading in this way. The people will want to imitate the leaders. Servant leadership shows the way to change by spending time in small group fellowship. This will help the people feel closer to each other and with the leader. They will be communicating more naturally and they will find it easier to work together.

Burmese Christian immigrant leaders are meeting to learn about their congregation's needs, both physical and spiritual. Burmese servant leaders share the gospel and encourage the congregation. For example, Jesus is a transformational leader because he has his Father's vision and values and he changes people's lives. Burmese Christian leaders and deacons can work together to imitate the way Jesus showed us. How do they work together? They have regular meetings each month and discuss how the church should build stronger ministry. As they listen to each other and respect each other, the Christian immigrant servant leaders come

closer together. This increases their unity and helps them to do teamwork together. Christian immigrant servant leaders learn to work more closely together which means working in unity and building teamwork. The leaders learn together and encourage one another as congregations do within ministry. Servant leaders planning together and visioning together brings fruitfulness in the ministry. For example, people can see the leaders' vision and focus on the tasks and do the work together.

Burmese Christian immigrant transformational leaders create change through tasks like the following:

1. *Train the servant leadership group*: This will be very important because Burmese Christian leader training can teach new things. They can reproduce other Burmese Christians who follow Jesus like them, and understand how to lead others to Christ. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:17 says, “So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” For example, Jesus calls and trains the disciples by showing and teaching them how to teach, how to see, how to heal, how to live out the kingdom mission of the gospel. Wilkes says, “Jesus calling the twelve, Jesus called the disciples to carry out his mission to reach the lost and establish his kingdom on earth.”¹⁹

2. *Youth leadership training*: Christian Burmese immigrant youth training is necessary because our youth carry both the gospel and the stories of our heritage. We must train these leaders through story-sharing, mentoring, and empowerment. The timing as refugees is right for empowering our youth. The apostle Paul told us in 1 Timothy 4:12 says, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the

¹⁹ Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 214.

believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” How do we invite youth to help us in our new land? The youth have an important role in helping the older generation learn and cope with the new culture. In this way they can “honor their father and mother” and also help the church grow. Christian youth leaders should be good examples because the younger people will obviously learn from them. The Christian youth leader will certainly have times of failure but still they can learn from their failure and show others how to recover from mistakes in a godly way. This training must include both large and small group training so that deacons and youth leaders can reproduce more Christian leaders.

Paul’s Leadership, For Example

Bill Pence writes, “The first time we encountered Paul, then known as Saul of Tarsus, in the Book of Acts, it was during the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. We are told in Acts 8:1 that Saul approved of Stephen’s execution. Then, we are told how Saul ravaged the church (Acts 8:3). But Jesus saved Saul as he was on his way to Damascus, and chose him, the one who was persecuting Jesus and the church, to be the one to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.”²⁰ Burmese immigrant Christian may have had difficulty, fear and worry in their country. But the Lord heard their hardship and saw their flight from their home. How their lives change in this new country is amazing to see. They never give up their faith and carry their faith wherever they go. Paul was persecuted for being a Christian, but his life had been changed by God and he never stopped being a faithful follower of God. Burmese Christian servant

²⁰ Bill Pence, “Leadership Lessons from the Apostle Paul,” Center for Faith and Work, September 12th, 2019, <https://centerforfaithandwork.com/article/leadership-lessons-apostle-paul>.

leaders too are committed to lead the people as they continue to worship the Lord. Nothing can change their belief in God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Humility: Paul's leadership came out of a terrible life before he met Jesus; he persecuted Christians. But one day on the road to Damascus he met God and received God's call. Acts 9:4-5 says, "He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied." After that powerful call Paul became blind but Ananias prayed for him and he regained his sight. Paul starts preaching and teaching about Jesus as the Messiah to everyone. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:9 says, "Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit." Paul's life was totally transformed from angry enemy to humble Christian leader. Paul was transformed, giving total surrender to God. He accepted that the things he did were not good for a Christian. In Romans 7:15, Paul says, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." Paul's life was totally changing, as Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry said, "Change in knowledge, change in attitude, change in behavior and change in cultural norms and expectation."²¹

Burmese immigrant Christian leaders can learn from Paul's life. Paul's life was changed because he knew God's call to him to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Immigrant Christians can also change to seek the love and call of God. For example, Burmese immigrants come to the U.S and learn new cultures. Seeing the different cultures, immigrants develop new perspectives. They learn by seeing, hearing and working with the people.

²¹ Blanchard, Hodges and Hendry, *Lead like Jesus*, 248.

Paul's Servant-heart: Paul described how he sees himself as servant and follower of God. He starts his letter to the Romans by saying, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1). Paul's servant leadership is as one set apart for Jesus Christ and called to carry the gospel. Paul teaches servant leadership to his companions in the group, for example Paul instructed and encouraged while protecting them from false teaching. Paul customarily started his letters this way. 1 Timothy 1:3 says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." Servant leaders learn to know that they are set apart and called to lead other people. For example, in my own life, it is clear that God called me to lead Burmese congregations. I love and enjoy leading the Burmese immigrants in West Michigan.

Timothy is working at the ministry under Paul's guidance. Paul also trained Titus and appointed him to be elder at the church and take care of the ministry there. Timothy and Titus are both good workers and helpers of the Apostle Paul's ministry. Paul starts his letter to the Philippians by identifying himself: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons" (1:1). This means that service is a very big part of the ministry, as Jesus Christ showed us. He calls servant leaders to serve each other by the example of washing each other's feet. Jesus didn't depend on his own strength or decision-making, but all came from his Father. Jesus is our Servant-Leader. He called Himself servant. In Luke 22:27 Jesus asked, "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." Just as Paul did, Burmese immigrant leaders can identify

themselves as servants of Christ and lead the people as his followers. Together they can show their servant hearts, trusting and knowing God's power.

Leadership includes the ability to lead transformation when necessary, and we clearly see the need for positive transformation among the Burmese immigrant Christians as they must learn the new culture. Good leaders do not blame other people for the problems that arise. The servant leader who is serving the Burmese immigrant community will seek to understand and develop everyone—even the people who are most challenging. Leadership always wants to help others do what they do themselves. A leader will also lead other people into new things. The immigrant servant leader can teach his people to put their faith into action by trusting God to bring the immigrant community through every challenge.

A leader needs to walk the way God shows to lead people. A primary example of a good leader is Paul because he never lost his vision and leadership style, even when he was in prison. God appointed Paul to lead the Gentiles in his mission to preach the gospel. Burmese pastors and lay leaders can look at Paul's leadership as a model of mature spiritual leadership for diverse and mobile people groups. Paul suffered and bore much pain in his life, but he never changed course from his servant leadership because his call came from God.

Burmese immigrant Christian leaders should be based on the Bible; meaning following the teaching of Jesus. The apostle Paul says, "And Jesus is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy" (Colossians 1:8). Servant leadership will guide the local Burmese church into community, watching over the spiritual flock's needs as it grows. The

Burmese congregation's goal is to put down roots into the word of God and help others to grow. Servant leadership at the local church uses members' gifts and meets the needs of the Church, teaching them to serve others with love and humility.

Servant leaders also need to be willing to take risks to help others. Leaders can be creative and thoughtful about sustaining effectiveness in other people. The servant leaders are on the frontier to bring people together on a mission. They are like seekers searching to find something lost, building openness while searching to build better relationships with others. It is important that the leader's mission should be helping and guiding on the right path. The servant leaders should bear the fruit of faith in Christ. And always, good leadership will continue to learn by reflecting on their experiences and sharing the lessons with the people. The servant leader's mission is to lead with love. Servant leaders need to lead others in the way they should go with patience. A servant leader's love for God and for others is crucial. Paul himself put it best: "It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:7).

Conclusion

Long before this writer's arrival in the USA as a Burmese Christian immigrant refugee, he was becoming aware of an incorrect or incomplete view of leadership and how it should be put into practice in the church. His role as a church leader in a refugee camp prepared him to have a unique understanding of the problems facing the many refugees who were coming to the USA. These problems have several causes. They are rooted in the culture and history of Burma itself and the huge differences from the American culture which they were suddenly required to learn. They are also rooted in the distorted views of leadership they have come to hold because of what they have experienced. And they are rooted in a misunderstanding of what it is to be a servant leader. The military government of Burma holds the authority, and the people live in fear and worry about their life. The author contends that the Christian migrant servant leader must carry the gospel and share it with others so they may know the truth of Jesus Christ.

This Doctor of Ministry research project focuses on the need for servant leadership among Burmese Christian immigrants. This writer explored the difference between dictators, servant leadership, and slaves. Servant leadership is to serve others and make disciples. The approach in this project included scholarly teaching, forming a biblical and theological framework for servant leadership, and transformational servant leadership.

I have engaged with the writings of prominent leaders who write about servant leadership, including those who are traditionally known, as well as some of the newer, lesser-known contributors to the field. What makes this project unique is that I have also engaged

with several prominent Burmese writers and historians who have a thorough understanding of the particular problems of the substantial Burmese immigrant community. This research project is also based on real-world servant leadership practices in ministry, including many drawn from my own experiences as a refugee and a leader.

This writer's qualitative research brought new insights into the Burmese community and congregation as they are working through the difficulties of assimilating into American culture in a Christ-honoring way. Chapter one deals with the history of Burma (now Myanmar) and its traditionally dictatorial leadership. Violence, torture, and suppression of basic human rights are normal in the military government. The military government routinely abuses its power and uses its might to limit the choices of the people for even basic things like religious freedom and property ownership. Yet, the Burmese people want to have peace in the nation. Burmese Christian immigrants long for joy and peace and harmony.

The next chapter focuses on servant leaders among the Burmese Christian immigrants in the United States who are helping the people adjust to their new culture. For example, these servant leaders show them how to navigate school, work, congregation, the new laws, safe driving practices, medical care and doctor visits including the confusing paperwork—indeed, every aspect of life. In chapter three I emphasize the importance of servant leadership putting the needs, growth, and wellbeing of followers first. I examine how servant leadership focuses on a biblical model of leadership that helps Burmese Christian immigrants leading both at home and in the life of the church.

Chapter four deals with research that studies the pastoral leadership life. As the researcher, I witnessed in my own life the importance of living out the leadership principles

in my own life. This is especially for first-generation leaders as the Burmese Christian immigrants build a new culture. Burmese Christian immigrants face many hardships, including the loss of family and their familiar homes back in Burma. It is vital by sharing my story that the reader can see the servant leader's commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

Lastly, chapter five shows how transformational servant leadership means a change of life, as the old things become new. Servant leaders are willing to carry the good news to make disciples who in turn will make more disciples. Furthermore, this writer defined the essential and important role of Jesus' leadership from a biblical perspective. This servant leadership is rooted in theology and includes relational reflections about God in our relationship with each other. In addition to defining servant leadership, I have defined the importance of servant leadership as an experience within the lifelong journey of our relationship with God and others. As a servant leader I continue to experience and learn within the relationship of God and the congregation and participate meaningfully in the mission of God as laid out in the pages of the Bible. This is the ultimate focus of servant leadership.

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