

# **Servant Leadership**

*By Bobby Schuller*

Today I'm going to talk about fame and glory, impact, leadership and what Jesus says about all these things. And I want to begin this morning first by affirming in you that you are doing a lot more than you know.

Many of us, we feel in life, we wonder, especially as we get older, if we really did anything that mattered; if we really made a difference in the world. And many of us, especially those of us who are younger, have a desire to be famous; to be well known. And I actually think that if you have that desire to be famous, that usually it's not from a bad place. I think most people that kind of want that, they want it because they want their lives to have an impact. And I think you get this message sometimes from the world that if you're famous, then your life really mattered. In other words, if you're a great politician, or actor, or singer, or you write a bestselling book, or you do something that most people know you for, well then you really made a difference. And I believe that the first part is good. I want to have a life that makes a difference in the world, but I think the second part is missing something. That it's okay and even great sometimes to have a claim and to succeed, and even be famous, that in the end, that's really not what's going to matter. And we'll talk about that in a bit. But what I want to argue today is that in

spite of being famous, your life is having a much grander impact than you probably know, and especially more than you feel.

I remember I was driving Haven to school recently, a few days ago, and we always talk about stuff. And she was saying, “Daddy, I learned something. D.R. means doctor and J.R. means junior.”

And I said, “Oh like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?”

She goes, “Yes, he was a great man.”

And I said, “He was a great man. He is an American hero.”

And she said, “So it’s for Dr. King.”

I said, “Yes.” And I said, “Or someday can be for Dr. Haven, Dr. Schuller, you know, Haven Schuller.”

And she said, “Daddy, my dream isn’t to be a doctor.”

I was like, “Well that’s okay. Mine isn’t to be a doctor, either.”

She said, “My dream is to be either a famous singer, a famous artist, or both.”

And of course I said, “You’re going to be both. You’re going to be both a famous singer and a famous artist.”

But it shines light. The key word, I think for Haven, and in her innocence as a child, I want to be famous. I don’t think it was as much about being an artist or being a singer, as much as being famous. And I think children reveal, in many ways, what many of us have – this desire to be well known. And I want to change that thought. I think that most of

us who want that, it's again, coming from a good place. We want our lives to just matter.

And what I feel like the Lord is saying for you today is whether or not you're famous, your life matters in real ways. You are having a bigger impact than you know. And I think when we get to the end of life, and we make an accounting of the decisions we've made, many of us will regret that we focused so much on stuff that in the end didn't matter, and didn't focus enough on in the end the stuff that really does matter.

And many people who are famous, who are very successful, many if not most of them seem to struggle with things like despair, depression, meaninglessness, and yet they've achieved many of the things that LA tells us we need to achieve. Why is that?

There was an event; Simon Sinek who's a tremendous secular author wrote a book on leadership, it was great, called *Start with Why*. And he shared a story about how there was this elite gathering of CEO's and some of the most powerful people, and richest people in the world. And in this room the guy who started the speech had everybody raise their hand. He said to them how many of you have reached your financial goals? And almost every hand went in the air. And then he said how many of you feel successful? And almost every hand went down. Almost every hand went down. You see all people struggle with this feeling that I'm not really successful, and it's easy to ascribe that to not having done something really big and momentous.

Today I want to talk about that. Jesus teaches us that the biggest impact is in the deep places, not the wide places. In Jesus' day in the Roman Empire, it was all about glory. They had a cooler word for fame. It was glory because glory encompassed more than being well known, it meant that you had these huge trophies that you defeated some barbarian army, or you built some monumental city or something. And they believed that if they could do something so awesome with their lives that they would sort of live forever in the memory of others because of their achievements.

Julius Cesar, for example, when he was a kid would be brought into this room, I believe it was called a death room or something like that, and on the walls were wax faces. These are what are called death masks. You can see a death mask of Napoleon Bonaparte, for example. When famous men in Julius Cesar's lineage, at the moment they died, they would pour wax on their face to create like a monument of their actual face so that generations later you can actually see what they looked like. And Julius Cesar would be brought into this room and his dad or his mom would put his arm around his son and say something like son, this man did this, and your uncle did that, and your great, great grandpa did this, and you need to achieve these things, too. You need to do greater things than these.

So Julius Cesar, and many wealthy Romans, grew up with the idea that unless you do tremendous great big things, your life doesn't matter.

The dream was glory. Everybody say glory. You can almost feel it; feel like a Roman. They had this quote: they said that a man dies twice - one when breath leaves his body and again when his name is spoken for the last time. So this idea was if people speak your name forever, you'll live forever. So in other words, hear me out guys. In Jesus' day, the prevailing secular view was you can live eternally by gaining glory for yourself. Become famous, become a hero, become a celebrity and you will always be remembered. And though in a way you're dead, and another way you're alive because people will talk about you forever.

I want you to know something - again, I'm going to keep saying this. It's easy when we're doing little things like raising kids, or doing small things in a ministry, or doing things like reaching out to our neighbor at our work space, or doing things like being a quiet loving presence for hurting people. It's easy when we're doing those little things to feel like it's not really having an impact on history, for example. And I want to promise you it is. We're going to talk about that a little bit more in a minute.

In Mark chapter 10, Jesus repeats this theme over and over. In Mark chapter 10 there's these two guys James and John. They're two of the twelve that are following Jesus. And you have to understand something about the disciples. The 12 disciples, many of them believed that Jesus is ushering in a theocracy. They don't think he's talking about a changed heart, and like a new culture, a new life that's going to

bleed into all nations. Rather they think there's going to be an actual throne, a throne room, it's going to be in Jerusalem, and there's going to be a God king Jesus who's a theocrat, and they're going to be like his governors and lieutenants. And so what they're doing towards the end as he's getting close to Jerusalem to establish his kingdom is they're vying for position in the new government.

So James and John say to Jesus, Lord, when you enter into your kingdom, we are asking you that we sit one of us on your right hand, and another on your left. What does that mean? We want to be the number two guys in your kingdom. We want to be the second most powerful people in your kingdom second only to you. And what they're saying is look at all that we've done. We deserve essentially Roman glory in your kingdom. Put us, remember us, put us in the highest position at your right hand and your left. And Jesus says to them, you don't know what you're asking for. First, these positions have been saved for someone else but I have to ask you a question: can you drink the cup I'm going to drink? And can you wear the baptism I'm going to wear? And they said yes we can. And he said you will receive the baptism that I've received, and you will drink of the cup that I've drunk, and a lot of people think that means martyrdom, and they were martyred.

But he says to them but things are going to be different in my kingdom. And the word of God says this: he says you know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles, or Romans, those in the

Roman Empire, they lord it over people. And the high officials exercise authority over others. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. And whoever wants to be first must be slave to 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. Later, when Jesus is washing their feet, he says no servant is greater than their master. In the same way that I have served you, go and serve one another. In Jesus' upside down kingdom, the least become the greatest, and the greatest become the least. In Jesus' kingdom, to be great means to serve, or as my grandpa would say, to find a need and to fill it. You feel successful when you're meeting the real needs of other people. That's when you feel it. Not when you've elevated your own ego, not even when you've gotten famous, but when you've helped others.

And let me tell you something. If you're not a Christian or you're a secular or atheist, there is real wisdom here. The greatest people in history are not the Julius Cesar's and the Napoleon Bonaparte's. They're the Dr. Kings and the Mother Teresa's. Those are the true heroes. Those are the ones that are remembered, the ones who served others and oftentimes died in the process of helping those in need. In the kingdom of God, the greatest are those who serve, not those who are being served. And although we always want to look out for boundaries, and we don't want to neglect our own needs, God has called us to have a big impact in a deep way before a wide way.

Let me explain that. Remember the song deep and wide? If you grew up in Sunday school, deep and wide, deep and wide there's a fountain flowing deep and wide. Thank you, choir, you guys are the best. I think God wants us to have a deep impact and a wide impact. I think he wants both. The wide impact is the thing that everybody sees. That's the reach of your audience. That's how many people see you, know you, or are touched by you.

But the depth of your audience is how much you've touched them. And not just your audience, I'm talking about the people in life. And the depth of your reach is really, in a way, unknown. The width of your audience is measureable. The depth is unknown. You can't know. And so very often we neglect the deep things, like caring for our kids, for the wide things - creating some new project or ministry. Both are great, but I believe that the scriptures are telling us that the deep things matter more. That if you have to choose, if you have depth and width and the width gets cut but you have depth, the width will grow back. If you have width but no depth and the width gets cut, it's gone forever. The things that last are the things that are deep, not the things that are wide.

Jesus is the greatest leader who ever lived. And the reason he's the greatest leader who ever lived is he understood the dynamics of how we are all connected, and how the little decisions we make have a big, big impact. Jewish philosopher, wonderful man, the guy that said "give a man a fish feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, feed him for a

lifetime.” Maimonides the Rambam. He believed that the whole universe was fifty percent good, and fifty percent evil and that one act of good or one act of evil could tip the whole scale one way or the other. I don’t believe that, but it’s a nice thought.

I do believe that one small act either way can have an eternal impact on history in a way that you will see when you get to heaven, and you will see it. You will see how being faithful in the little things caused you to have a grand impact on the big things.

Jesus shows us what it means to truly lead. What it means to truly lead means to meet the needs of others. Jesus’ goal was not to glorify himself, although he will be glorified for all time. Jesus’ goal was to bless people. That’s all he did. He went around giving wisdom, healing people, raising people from the dead. He didn’t go around making people sick, he didn’t go around condemning everyone, he was here to bring people to life and he did, and he’s still doing that. And it seemed like Jesus focused on 12 people, not the mobs. And although big crowds would follow him, he’d kind of shoo them away. There was one event in which his crowd was almost the biggest, he’s almost the famous he’d ever been, and he said something crazy. He said unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you’ll have no life in you, and everybody just walked away. They’re like this guy’s nuts. And then he went to his 12 disciples and he says why haven’t you left? And they really, they just go we ain’t got no place to go. It was like yes, everything you said was totally bat crazy, like it was

out of this world nuts, but we don't have anywhere to go, so we're going to see how this all plays out.

So Jesus' goal is really to drill down and coach 12 people. He's God, okay? Twelve is the max for him, and he's God, okay? And so he focuses on 12 people, and that movement, we're a part of that movement, all of us, everyone in this room. The millions of people watching on TV are a part of one man touching 12 lives. Jesus never wrote a book. He never left his country. He never met an emperor. And yet he's the most famous important person in history. AD and BC is all built around his birth! Why? Because he realized that it's about serving others, and he realized it's not about the width, it's about the depth first. If you want to reach a wide audience, you got to reach a deep audience first. You can change the whole world and all of history by believing and investing in one person, not just 12. What you're doing for others is so important, and you'll see it someday. You'll see how you touched one domino and how millions were touched because of your faithfulness, and I'm so proud of you. I'm so proud of you. It's easy being a grandparent, being a parent, being an everyday employee, doing the rote things in life and just being faithful to God in those little things to forget that being faithful in those things makes all the difference in the world.

And by the way, don't give up on the promise that God really does have a big dream for you. It's coming. But you focus on your character and God will focus on your calling. That's a promise.

It's about the individual, not the masses. It's about serving, not being served. And it's about secrecy, not fame. And I know there's an irony about like I'm a pastor, I'm talking to a lot of people and there's a lot of people watching on TV, and there is an irony in me talking about this, but I just want to say that my hope in life; like I love this ministry and I love Hour of Power, but I know that the greatest accomplishment I can ever have is to be a great dad and a great husband. And if I fail in those areas, then all this, in a way in the kingdom of God, is almost forfeit. I believe that. And the pastors that I've seen that have gone the longest and been the happiest and done the best are the ones who recognize the importance of family and friends in the little things. If I ever leave the ministry, it'll be because of my two kids. And the greatest thing I'll accomplish in my life will be those two kids. And that's not in any way to say that I don't love this ministry, and I do, but I have to recognize.. we all have to recognize in life it's those little things, those little lives that depend on us that are the most important. Can I get an amen? Hey, all right. That's a good one.

The power is in the secrecy. The power is in the small things that nobody sees. The power is in the secret places. I think of myself in some ways as a bit of a Sermon on the Mount scholar. I love Sermon on the Mount. I studied it for years. I memorized it. I translated it from Greek. I love it. In almost every sermon I cite it at some point or another. And one of the big things that was a big surprise that very few, including Dallas

Willard, ever pointed out about the Sermon on the Mount was this reward component. Jesus talks about a reward constantly through the Sermon on the Mount. He keeps asking this question: if you do this, what reward will you get? If you do that, what reward will you get? I infer, as I'm reading it, that I'm supposed to get a reward. That there's some reward I'm supposed to attain. What is the reward? Its eternal life, its treasures in heaven, but it's also blessing in this life, too.

There's this part where Jesus says "seek first the kingdom and his righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you." There is no way in its context you can deny that that's about health and material blessing in this life right now. You read it, it's clear as day. And as a Reformed guy, I'm super uncomfortable with that because that doesn't fit. But it's true. Jesus says something like.. so he's all these things like do it in secret so you won't lose your reward. Do it in secret so you won't lose your reward. It's not that everything you do has to be in secret, it means that you do it not for acclaim, you do it for God. That in your heart, whether people see it or not, you're doing it from the right place.

So he says when you give to the needy, don't let your left hand know your right hand is doing, or else you'll lose your reward. When you pray, don't do it so everybody can see it, or else you'll lose your reward. When you fast, don't act.. oh I'm so hungry. I haven't had waffles today. You'll lose your reward! And so often we get so frustrated when we do

great things for others and nobody notices. We feel offended, we feel hurt. But I believe that the less people notice and the greater the deed, the greater the reward that's coming. I believe that! In fact I penned together this very well done.. this is my hand writing. I didn't take art or English. Okay anyway. Like this. I believe that the greater the deed and the lesser the acclaim, the greater the reward is in the middle. Now you feel like I've been doing all this stuff and nobody notices. Praise the Lord for that. Heaven is going to open up so wide for you, there's going to be so much blessing, there's not going to be enough room to contain it. The only thing better than not receiving acclaim for your good deed is to be persecuted for your good deed. Man, if you can get people blogging about you, if you get somebody to fire you, if you can go to jail for doing some great deed, oh my gosh! The reward are going to be so big! It's going to be like over the moon! That's the way things work in the kingdom. You want to be blessed, do great things and hope nobody notices.

Not me, right? When I do something great and nobody notices, I get my feelings hurt, and wonder why I didn't get a thank you card. What does Jesus do? When Jesus does something great for somebody, so often he's like don't tell anybody. Right? Don't tell anybody. Don't tell anyone. Just keep it to yourself. You're welcome. It almost is like I wasn't supposed to do that. Just don't tell anybody.

I want you to know God sees the good things that you've done and the good things you're doing. He's so proud of you and so am I. I am so

proud of you because I'm going to be standing with you on that day when you see the great impact your faithfulness in the little things did for millions of people. Millions.

There's something about the really refined perfect hero that bothers us all and something about the anti hero that we all love. That's why my favorite characters are the anti heroes, right? Batman, Strider from Lord of the Rings, the man with no name, Hans Solo. He was an anti hero. He shot first. He only saved Lei for the money. Right? There's something about these heroes that are these very flawed, leaders with a limp that seem to be more memorable than the typical superman type heroes. Right? Everybody likes Batman more than Superman. Who likes Superman more? Everybody.. am I right, choir? Do you even know what I'm talking about? Thank you. Hannah likes Superman. We're getting off the reservation here. Let's bring it back. Focus.

Okay. The point remains I think the reason I like anti heroes so much is because I see it in real life. I see that God likes to use imperfect people to do impossible things. God likes to raise up heroes along with their flaws, in spite of their flaws. All of their flaws are still there. They're still greedy, they're still angry, they're still neurotic, they're still unpredictable, they're still mavericks, and yet they still do incredible things for God. And I want you to know that many of the shiny, perfect heroes that you see are not as shiny and perfect as they look on Facebook. You need to know that. You need to know one: that you're

having a bigger impact than you know, and two: God's going to get you to your destiny and you don't have to worry about it. You focus on your character God will focus on your calling. He'll get you there. It's a word from him. You focus on the depth he'll focus on the width. You focus on your heart he'll focus on the people. You focus on your character he'll focus on your calling. He will get you there.

There's one thing I've been mad about. Years ago, I used to preach about this thing called the chaos theory, which is something I love. And I remember I preached about it so much that Pastor Chad and another pastor, Pastor Michael pulled me aside and like you got to stop talking about the chaos theory. You talk about it way too much. And the reason I talk about it so much is in my opinion, mathematical proof that everything I'm saying and everything that Jesus said is true. Chaos theory is this: small differences in initial conditions yield widely diverging outcomes for dynamical systems. And this is a very nerdy way of saying little things make a big difference. It's oftentimes referred to as the butterfly effect because the father of chaos theory said something along the lines like it could be that the small flap of a butterfly's wings in Alaska causes a tornado in Texas. That that's actually.. you can see that and the reason it's called chaos theory is because the grand impact of little things can be so big and vast that it's actually immeasurable which makes scientists uncomfortable cause in the world of science, if you can't measure it, it doesn't exist. So they call it chaos theory because they're at

least able to know that little things have such a big impact. And this is true. And can I tell you, when you get to heaven, I believe God's going to show you how your faithfulness in that little tiny thing, it might have been really difficult and nobody noticed, changed history.

I've always believed that someone like Dr. Martin Luther King was the result of one loving thing another person did for someone else a hundred and fifty years before. Or a villain like a Joseph Stalin, that could be one act of theft or unkindness three hundred years before that ultimately culminated in the forming of this one rotten person that killed so many people. Your actions matter. And you may not be famous, but you're powerful and you're making a big difference and you're making a good difference and that difference is tilting the balance in the right direction, and God, am I thankful for you. I am so thankful for you and I'm proud of you.

Lord, thank you for calling us here. We pray, God that you would put a peace in our heart that in our faithfulness and obedience we're making a difference in the world. And I just want to pray for everyone that's desperate for a big dream. Lord, we are big dreamers here. I pray, God that you would help every person reach that dream and fulfill it according to your goodness and faithfulness. Thank you, Lord, you're not condemning us, you're not judging us, you're lifting us up, you've forgiven us, you're proud of us and we love you. And all of us, we depend in Jesus' name. It's in his name we pray, and everyone said, amen.

