

# GROWING Together

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## TIN PANS & POETRY: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

“What makes you think this corporation has anything to learn from Sunday School?” asked the president of a large and profitable corporation. He had been invited to send one of his senior executives to an event sponsored by the schools of theology and business administration at a major university. He was not a cynical man, but for him the separation of business and religion into separate, airtight categories was as clear as the split between tin pans and poetry.<sup>1</sup>

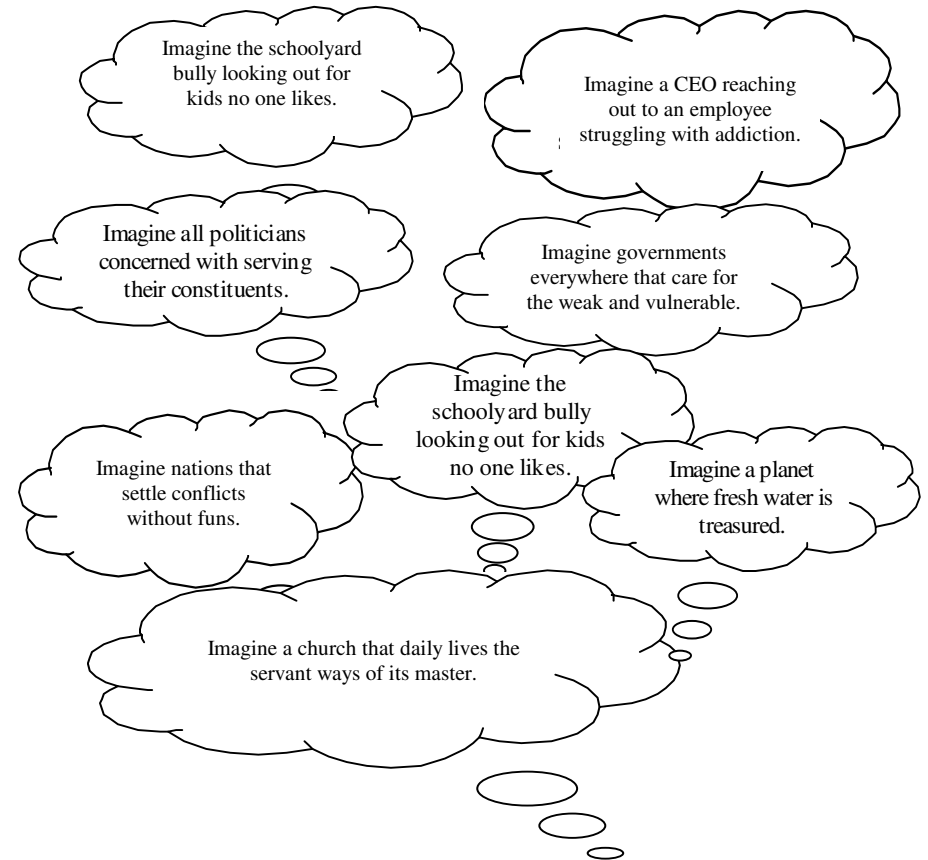
Does our faith have anything to say to those who are leaders in business, government and society? Can a man who walked the earth two thousand years ago still inform, and perhaps even transform, the way we shape our relationships and care for our planet at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

“Servant leadership” is not just a technique to be learned or an organisational model to be applied. It is a way of life rooted in the life and teaching of Jesus. Christians believe that Jesus represents God in human form ... but what a surprising representative he is! Born in humble circumstances, Jesus teaches that the way to greatness is through serving others. He has compassion for the weak. His ministry includes outcasts and people on the margins. He gathers a community where the first become last, the greatest become least, and the leader is one who serves.

At the final meal before his death, Jesus pours water into a basin and begins to wash the disciples’ feet. The disciples object. But Jesus insists: “For I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:15)

Servant leaders have particular goals and definitions of success. They use power not to coerce but to care for and enable. They emphasise co-operation over competition. Important decisions are shared. All workers are treated as colleagues. Bridges are built to include people who are differently gifted. Success means helping others achieve what God desires for them. Creativity, vision, courage and integrity are employed for the good of all.

Imagine what “servant leadership” can mean for us today ...



Servant leadership is not weak-kneed submission. Nor is it an impossible dream. It is the real product of visionary risk-taking, bold creativity, and faithful endurance. It is a commitment to bring tin pans and poetry together.

<sup>1</sup> Sims, Bennet J. *Servanthood: Leadership for the Third Millennium*, Boston: Cowley Publications, 1977, p. 127.

GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five monthly Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ's faithful.

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