

# A Response to “The Clay Feet of Servant Leadership”

JEFFREY MOORE  
Anderson University

The paper “The Clay Feet of Servant Leadership” (Locke, 2019) brings forward an interesting question about the validity of the Christian community to adopt the modern philosophy of servant leadership. This is an interesting and timely perspective. My reflection will center on three points that I feel deserve more emphasis: the image of God, the example of Jesus Christ, and a modern Christian leadership perspective.

When we study the creation in Genesis, we discover that God creates man in his own image. Particularly God says let us create man in *our* own image. The first chapters of Genesis shows how God himself lives in relationship, orchestrates, organizes, and delegates. His leadership is collaborative, has a standard of right and wrong, is creative, and is productive. God is personal not distant, God breathes into man the breath of life, the spirit of God. God communicates and dialogues with Adam and Eve daily. The most amazing part to me as a leadership scholar is how God gives Adam and Eve the directive to rule. His directive is not let man rule over woman, or woman over man, but rather let them rule together. Let them rule within the framework of God’s design, together, in submission to God. Here we see the image of God reappearing. The triune God, setting his creation to work together in submission to him, in his image.

The Gospel message is the picture of a kinsmen redeemer who rescues one who is lost and destitute. Jesus Christ, out of love for the Heavenly Father, goes to the cross to die for our sin. Jesus pays the penalty that we could never pay—this amazing grace! The example of Christ is truly the servant leader. Matthew 20:28 states, “[T]he Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The whole mission of Christ is to serve. The Christian businessman or woman really can say to lead in submission to God is to serve. The concept of servant leadership is articulated in many places (Mark 10:45, John 13:1-17). Luke 22: 25-27 shows us

that leadership is based on service: “I am among you as one who serves.” One of the facets of God’s leadership is clearly servant leadership.

From my experience in teaching leadership and as a consultant in leadership development for the past 25 years, I have never heard a graduate business student or a company executive bring up Greenleaf (1970, 1996). I am not saying that they don’t know of him, but I never asked, and it never came up. In my discussions, when the term servant leadership was mentioned it was always in reference to the example of Christ in Matthew 20:25-28 and Luke 22:24-27.

Therefore, my encouragement is not to spend exhaustive time studying the work of Greenleaf (1970, 1996) as a gold standard but rather spend “much time” to discover and study the Truth that God has articulated in the created order, from which servant leadership is an essential component (Chewning, 2001, p. 119). I think our leadership research should focus on how to effectively work together—as teachers and students, managers and employees, owners and executives, politicians and citizens—in submission to God. My experience has shown that as I draw near to God, my fear and pride are reduced. In doing so, I increase listening to others and increase my concern for the things that are important to them which increases my leadership influence.

## REFERENCES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Jeffrey Moore** serves as a full-time professor of management and associate dean of the graduate business program at Anderson University. He teaches international business, and graduate courses in executive management and international business. Dr.

Moore received his PhD from the University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis. He is an author on university business student moral development as well as on inclusive management. Dr. Moore and his wife have adopted six of their eight children from Haiti, Philippines, Romania, and India.