



FORGIVENESS AND POWER IN THE AGE OF ATROCITY:  
SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

*A Review*

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A fresh, critical look is being taken at the issues of power and authority, and people are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways.

—Greenleaf 1998, 17

Robert Greenleaf pioneered the concept of servant-leadership in his work *Servant-Leadership* in 1970. Since then, various essays, studies, and books have explored different aspects of Greenleaf's ideas. Larry Spears, building on Greenleaf's work, presented his well-known and often used ten characteristics of servant-leadership. Throughout the refinement of the articulation of servant-leadership, difficult questions addressing how servants lead in situations of violence, coercive power, and aggression have arisen. In the book *Forgiveness and Power in the Age of Atrocity: Servant-Leadership as a Way of Life* (published by the scholarly press Rowman & Littlefield/Lexington in 2012), Shann Ray Ferch addresses these questions utilizing a multidisciplinary approach. Dr. Ferch uses his experiences as a professor of leadership studies, research psychologist, and leadership consultant and his background as a critically acclaimed poet and writer to synthesize servant-leadership from various angles, penetrating to the core of living a servant-led life. As Ferch summarizes, "the book is a journey into the extreme conditions of human conflict and human evil" (xxii), using dark examples of violence among people to "give the opportunity to embark on a path of discovery, self-responsibility, and commitment to one another" (xxiv). This is the path of servant-leadership. In this book it is explored through three primary types of encounters with human consciousness: disorientation of the spirit, listening, and confirmation of the inherent worth of people.



## DISORIENTATION OF THE SPIRIT

Ferch uses varied literary techniques in presenting a deep journey through servant-leadership. While exercising the rigors of scholarly research, the book addresses the beauty and grace that can be found in compelling stories. There are various ways of finding truth and Ferch seeks to tap into diverse voices to deepen one's personal connection to the text. As Greenleaf (1998) stated, there is a danger in using only one method in understanding a problem. "The danger is to hear the analyst too much and the artist too little" (18). Many management decisions are made based on the bottom line and quantitative data, but true leadership also deeply honors the qualitative and emotional aspects of the whole person. The topics discussed in the book are multifaceted and complex. The use of diverse analytical tools honors and examines those complexities. By inviting the mind to process the juxtaposition of scientific, artistic, and contemplative reflections, Ferch seeks to "dis-orient" and "re-orient" the "mind, heart, and spirit, so we can see afresh the centuries-old problem of human violence" (xxiv). This technique means that the book is not meant to be linear or to be read quickly. Readers are compelled to make thoughtful bridges in the reading and new insights as they seek a reorientation of thought to understand the gravity of the nexus where violence and forgiveness meet. Through in-depth examination of history, theology, social science, and the arts, the many ways in which humans express themselves as seekers of understanding are dignified.

Ferch's use of stories, poems, and art continues a process Greenleaf (1998) presented in his original work *The Servant as Leader*. Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East* resonated with Greenleaf on his own path to define servant-leadership. Hesse, a Nobel Prize winner in literature, generated enduring insights about the nature of humanity. "The arts, in seeking to understand the world transparently and with increased acuity, lend resonance to our knowledge of one another," which can "create insistent echoes for those ready to hear" (Ferch 2012, 27). Ferch presents the creative and artistic process as not only a part of servant-leadership, but as a part of what makes us human. Throughout the book, the direct words of people who have been through pain and violence provide a powerful backdrop. Ferch shows how the reflective process involved in the writing and creation of art can serve as a catharsis for healing and forgiveness.

Ferch, inspired by Hesse and Greenleaf, utilizes storytelling as a tool in personal and communal healing. These ideas are consistent with peace-making literature. For example, after the genocide and violence in Rwanda,



there was an upswing in artistic expression by the victims and witnesses of genocide (Breed 2009; Kalisa 2006). Stories, poems, and songs were used to release the pain in individuals and also in the community. An outgrowth of the traditional community foundations of oral storytelling has been the development of theater pieces that are read, performed, and celebrated in the community. These pieces are not used to highlight the horrors of the past, but rather to provide a path to reconciliation. “Theater for the sake of recovery has become a natural tool in conflict and post-conflict areas” (Kalisa 2006, 516). In Rwanda and other countries, such as South Africa, art plays a crucial role in expressing the ongoing process that peace takes after conflicts. Through theater, radio plays, and film, the community honors their oral traditions while moving through the dark pains of genocide. In cases such as those of the artists in Rwanda, art gives a voice to the marginalized. Ferch’s work uses poetry and fiction alongside other forms of writing to tap into these healing traditions to present lived examples of art and storytelling that build human interaction. Not only are the art pieces potentially cathartic for the artist, but by creating them for the theater and consumption by the community, art brings people together and gives them a way of relating and talking with one another. Healing-oriented servant-leadership through art gives people common experiences in which they can relate to one another.

#### LISTENING: FOR THOSE READY TO HEAR

A compelling section of the book occurs as Ferch describes a conversation he had with Larry Spears in which Spears identifies listening as the foundation of all other servant-leadership characteristics. The discussion focuses on Greenleaf’s idea that the servant is “able to approach people first by listening and trying to understand, rather than by trying to problem-solve or lead” (24). In reflecting on models of servant-leadership, Ferch presents his conclusion: “through listening, servant-leaders discern the path ahead, and their interactions with others are then defined by the holistic embrace of empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. In listening, we surrender our ego and seek the above the line consciousness that results in a life lived for the greater good of others and the world” (2012, 130). To embrace others holistically requires a whole person. Leaders who are aware of their own emotions, tendencies, and roles in an organization not only have their own wholeness in mind, but are aware of the needs of others in the



group to be whole as well. Honest, intent listening honors the other person. People often feel as though others do not listen to them, and thus they feel silenced even as they are speaking. When a leader openly listens to others, it helps free the speaker and heal the speaker from the continual small hurtful moments that cumulatively create a feeling of being silenced and alienated from others. Through listening, health and freedom occur.

Throughout the work, Ferch affirms that dialogue between people creates a healthy sense of leadership that builds esteem and reverence for the other person and serves both speaker and listener. Human destruction such as the Nazi Holocaust has shown that genocide and violence disintegrate language (Kalisa 2006). The difficult question is how leaders can give voice to those who have been scarred into silence. Those in power often use language as a coercive tool, objectifying those seen as the enemy and controlling system information and, by extension, the message. Ferch builds on Gadamer's philosophical work, as well as Freire's work in the field of critical pedagogy, to discuss dialogue. In postconflict situations where language has been used as a tool of coercion, giving voice to those who have been silenced is complex and difficult but is imperative to the restoration process. Language as used for oppression presents a black-and-white image of the world in which those in powerful positions own the one possible answer. Ferch presents the healing nature of servant-leadership as tied to Gadamer's idea of the eloquent question. Unlike language used for authoritative coercion where those in charge possess the sole answers to all questions, an eloquent question is one to which the asker doesn't know the answer. The eloquent question opens the one who asks to the possibility of learning from the person answering the question. Eloquent questions humble the asker and give power to the speaker. "Different from discussion, dialogue seeks restoration with others and resolves conflicts through sacrificial giving as well as attention to fairness. Listening is the cornerstone of dialogue. Reconciliation is dialogue's end result" (Ferch 2012, 29).

Ferch uses examples from world conflict to show the power of dialogue in reconciliation. While reading the descriptions of violence in modern human history can cause a visceral reaction and disorient the reader, they also highlight how dialogue in postviolence settings creates healing in communities through listening. Ferch visits the history of the United States and the Native American genocide, as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work in South Africa, and healing in Rwanda. In each of these cases, the shocking abyss of human violence is addressed through



growth and listening, as victims and perpetrators join together in dialogue around a shared history of human cruelty.

People's inability to talk productively about important issues centers around the inability to listen (Kahane 2004). "Rather than coming together in order to talk productively and wrestle together about important issues" (x), we find ourselves waiting for a pause in which to speak to reiterate our already firmly held opinion. "Listening requires opening ourselves. Our typical patterns of listening in difficult situations are tactical, not relational. We listen for what we expect to hear" (x). The tactical nature of humans is explored in the book as humans are shown to engage in shallow conversations with others generally. In our egocentrism, we insulate ourselves. People carry wounds of shame and darkness and avoid relating to others due to fear of being discovered. "Every person has generated and sustained alienation in the self, the family, or the workplace" (Ferch 2012, 71). However, as Senge (Kahane 2004) says, "Listening requires opening ourselves. . . . Opening our minds ultimately means opening our hearts" (xi). The goal of listening to others is to "transcend our fears of vulnerability, not finding new ways of protecting ourselves" (xii). Ferch's work expands on the idea of openness. "In listening, and being willing to be transformed by our encounters with others, we come into a dialogue that can liberate us, restore our sense of peace, and create healing. We ask questions in order to gather greater understanding" (2012, 29). To fully listen to others, we must be able to shed shame and open ourselves.

Throughout the book, personal story and reflection are used to help illustrate the servant-leader's journey. In the book's preface, Larry Spears calls Ferch one of the most empathetic and authentic humans. As the book relates, challenges to Ferch's personal armor and to his family meant that the road to empathy and shedding shame was not always pleasant. Through Ferch's eyes the reader gains insight into his or her own paths and experiences with selfishness and power. As he frames his personal growth, he presents his early understanding of leadership as focusing on the masculine and hierarchical images of ambition and bravery. People are told they are leaders or are expected to take on leadership roles simply from the positions into which they are placed. However, this forced leadership, or self-defined idea of leadership, is outside of the understanding of the servant-leader Greenleaf (1998) presents: "Becoming a servant-leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (18). Self-understanding, reflection, and the call to lead stand



at the core. Only after understanding oneself does a conscious decision to lead others take place.

Out of this contemplation, servant-leadership's next step is a conscious decision to act. "A particular strength of servant-leadership is that it encourages everyone to actively seek opportunities to both serve and lead others, thereby setting up the potential for raising the quality of life throughout society" (Spears 1998, 10). In *Forgiveness and Power*, Ferch guides the reader through what Joe Batten (1998) discussed in his essay on servant-leadership: "The real servant-leader of tomorrow is, above all, a thinker who acts with passion" (39). This passion, according to Batten, is to serve and is the natural outgrowth of the leader's self search. Once the conscious decision has been made to serve and help others, that decision is undertaken with dedication and intentionality. Servant-leaders are left with "confidence and footing as they cross the chasm of personal growth to arrive at a life devoted to helping fulfill the highest-priority needs of others" (46). Serving becomes more than an organizational catchphrase. Instead, serving becomes deeply rooted in life.

Ferch overlays his own journey on Greenleaf's original work, pointing to the desire to serve first as a guide in our own reflective process. Leadership is discovered in the process of knowing oneself, and thus, understanding the deep-rooted will to serve others. "The real secret of servant-leadership is that it is grounded in a deep and objective understanding of the human person" (Bausch 1998, 240). Understanding our own humanity allows us to better understand the humanity of others. Through a call to contemplation, awareness, consciousness, and action, *Forgiveness and Power* reveals that a commitment to quietness, discernment, courage, forgiveness, and love is essential to developing the servant-first ethos. While one's interactions with others are often superficial and loaded with selfish defenses, Ferch models a new way of presenting oneself to others in dialogue: the listener is humble and quiet; the listener honors and learns from the speaker.

Although there is often a cultural push in the United States to avoid personal accountability and to avoid coming to terms with one's own capacity for darkness, a full exploration of personal despair can lead to authenticity and wholeness. "A quality inner life leads to a rich and abundant total life" (Batten 1998, 45). The process of self-understanding goes through understanding both the darkness of despair and the light of joy. "Wholeness is our natural state; unrelated separateness is an illusion" (Gardiner 1998, 117). Sturnick (1998) stated that focusing only on the darkness can lead



to depression and can shift the focus from self as “mangled, wounded, disempowered, disenchanting, confused, and disheartened” (185) to self as whole, meaningful, and ultimately of service to others. Ferch points out that all humanity experiences being needy, reactive, defensive, and self-absorbed. People have the capacity to live in anger, anxiety, and fear. Acknowledging that capacity is important, not to wallow in fear and anxiety, but as a way to be honest with oneself and to make the conscious choice to change.

In *Forgiveness and Power*, consciousness and the choice to be a servant first go together. Consciousness is illustrated through highlighting models of servant-leaders who have shown servant-leadership in times of violence, imprisonment, and war. Awareness of what is happening internally and externally is consciousness. As an example, Ferch (2012) points to Vaclav Havel’s life and ideas. “Consciousness precedes being. . . . Hope is a state of mind, not of the world” (122). Havel presents a maturity that humans can achieve, but only if they act consciously and creatively. “Gratitude, forgiveness, and power accompany Havel’s view of being and consciousness, a view of the life of the mind and spirit whose illumination is expressed in the body and breath, the elemental basis of what it means to be human” (122). Consciousness of the value of oneself and the value of others leads to greater valuing and greater listening. If dialogue is to occur, consciousness is necessary. Havel maintains that “without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and we will not escape the catastrophe toward which the world is heading” (Gardiner 1998, 116). In servant-leadership and at the core of consciousness is the idea that humans have value, and the natural valuing of people is what can heal organizations, families, and countries.

While leadership studies’ authors and theorists have written on relationship-centered leadership, servant-leadership has always differed from other leadership theories. Ferch identifies the difference as Greenleaf’s focus on healing. While other forms of leadership discuss helping others and sharing power in an organization, Ferch presents Greenleaf’s work on power not simply as being a way of giving others power, but as a relationship based on healing that then gives others the gifts of power, freedom, and health.

Judith Sturnick (1998) wrote a beautiful essay entitled “Healing Leadership” that looks at the realities of the great number of business leaders who experience depression and fear of failure when seeking to take action. She builds a case of healing for these leaders to tap into a leadership that, as Greenleaf (1998) calls for, “points to a better way to live fully



and serenely” (16). She presents servant-leadership as leadership that takes place on two levels. First, healing restores leaders by “bringing them back to emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical health,” and second, leaders then use the “wisdom and insight gained through that healing process to provide leadership that heals and transforms the quality of life and work within our organizations” (186). Ferch’s book serves as an expansion of the process Sturnick discusses. Healing wisdom, according to Sturnick, is “comprehending and honoring boundaries, releasing obsessive and destructive perfectionism, seeking creative responses to ambiguity . . . and maximizing the elements of discovery and surprise” (190). While on first reading the process may seem daunting, Ferch’s presentation of the healing process gives insight and helps to personalize it and to make the theoretical applicable. His work presents research on forgiveness and healing, but uses a graceful blend of story and research to help guide the reader through the character development it takes to heal oneself in order to help heal others.

Ferch artfully illustrates the leader’s healing process as dealing with two extreme emotions central to human nature: joy and despair. If one simply looks at one’s own positive attributes, an egocentric limitation of truth develops. If one focuses only on the darkness, there is also a risk of egocentricity, but an egocentricity that blocks full vision as the leader evaluates decisions through the haze of negativity and doubt. Ferch (2012) calls on us to be tenacious in the processes we use to “see our own impact on others, our own faults, and to take responsibility for our faults, ask forgiveness, and become more true” (30) to avoid either egocentric extreme. Ferch’s “more true” leader is the holistic person who is aware of both joy and despair and who makes conscious decisions based on this awareness. Forgiveness, both of self and others, is the antidote for people’s tendency to wallow in their mistakes.

Spears (1998) points to servant-leadership’s ability to heal as its great strength. Understanding that people are bound by the search for wholeness is one of Greenleaf’s original points. Ferch’s experiences and professional work in family counseling join forgiveness and healing into a formidable combination. “Both forgiveness and the disciplined process of reconciliation draw us into a crucible from which we can emerge more refined, more willing to see the heart of another, and more able to create just and lasting relationships” (2012, 17). Being aware of our own limitations affects not only ourselves, but those with whom we interact. When we change how we look at ourselves, it changes how we look at others. “Excellence in many forms defines the servant-leader, but the source resides in the interior, in



discernment and relational capacity” (73). We become more ready to serve by entering into dialogue and seeking creative ways to interact and solve problems. “Forgiveness asks us to love our way through a little bit of messiness, and in fact, often a great deal of messiness” (17). In revealing stark examples of violence and darkness, *Forgiveness and Power* highlights how painful and messy the process of healing can be and shows that even in extreme cases forgiveness is possible.

Shame is a daunting emotion and appears whenever people reflect on human devastation. “Forgiveness is not cheap; it requires a form of personal integrity that is hard won” (Ferch 2012, 72). A high-level forgiveness experience, one that is unconditional, involves “an overarching regard for the humanity evident even in the center of human evil” (72). Understanding forgiveness and its effect on oneself and others helps overcome shame. Ferch’s research on touch and forgiveness presents “lifting of the burden of shame” and “restoration of oneness” (186) as being linked as people seek ways to heal.

#### PEOPLE OF INHERENT WORTH

Brain biology theory notes that people, as primates, have extremely large brains in comparison to the rest of the body. The social brain hypothesis (Dunbar 2009) suggests that our large brains are needed to navigate complex social systems. The theory notes that the complexities of systems demand awareness of our capacities for dark and light as we relate to others. What stands out in the idea of the social brain is the word “social.” As primates, people are hard-wired to relate to and interact with others. Humans have a need for others and a need to have personal value within the community. From a purely evolutionary perspective the need for others is innate. Ferch does not discuss the biology of the brain, but he draws on the “ancientness and primalness of human beings being together, and being together through this act of listening and talking, as a way for us to surface, or to develop, greater awareness of how we are reacting to what’s going on in the world” (209). Ferch understands that the idea of human worth goes against much of the general culture. “The idea of the leader as servant is rooted in the far-reaching ideal that people have inherent worth, a dignity not only to be strived for, but beneath this striving a dignity irrevocably connected to the reality of being human” (18). Servant-leadership presents people not only as biological beings but also as creative and spiritual in nature, which builds connection to others and demonstrates the lived experience of inherent worth.



While the social brain hypothesis suggests there is a biological drive for community and social interaction among people, servant-leadership moves beyond the strictly biological and addresses the inherent worth of people, based on the essence of spirit in people and in the world. The spirit, in Greenleaf's understanding, becomes the driver for the need to serve: "Spirit may be a profound manifestation of the deep good and strength in a person, and a primary ingredient that makes a civilized society possible" (Spears 1998, 195). Unfortunately, many in today's dominant culture see discussions of spirit as being too closely tied to organized religion. Religion can be used as a way to judge others and frame discussions in a negative light. This view limits the beauty of the spirit and the effect of spirit on people as they seek to live out their core beliefs. Based on his Quaker roots, Christianity helped guide Greenleaf's articulation of servant-leadership, and Ferch's own Christian theology offers a key to the spirit that ties people together. For both authors, the worth of other people, the dignity they are worthy of receiving, is tied directly to the value of the human spirit.

Parker Palmer (1998) says that the words *leadership* and *spirit* are vague and incredibly difficult to pin down and define. Putting two such words together can be problematic. However, Palmer also points out, spirit is based on how "the spiritual journey moves inward and downward, not outward and upward toward abstraction" (Palmer 1998, 201). Spiritual work is the work of the inner journey that the servant-leader takes in better understanding self and others. Where Palmer and others freely uses the term "spirit," Ferch doesn't tie into one definition or term, but rather honors the language of "spirit" from various traditions of thought and belief. "What mystic Christianity defines as the Mystery, and branches of Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Tao define as soul force, life force, or life energy" (127) is a part of what makes each person valuable and worthy of having a voice.

Both Greenleaf and Ferch are inclusive in their discussion of spirit and the role it plays in servant-leadership. Greenleaf presents servant-leadership as being open to people of all religions, creeds, and cultures (18). An example from *Forgiveness and Power* notes that indigenous cultures practice "holistic, cooperative, communal, intuitive, and spiritual" (77) leadership. This is in alignment with Palmer (1998), who presents all major spiritual traditions as having common threads. They "are not primarily about values and ethics, not primarily about doing right or living well. The spiritual traditions are primarily about reality" (199). Spirituality is not based solely on the eternal world; rather, it serves as a vehicle to pierce the underlying



truth of our full humanity and purpose. Ferch stresses that spirit is not tied to one particular religion. However, Ferch is also open regarding his own Christian beliefs and shows how forgiveness and the innate value of people are foundational to a Christian ethos.

One of the core principles in orthodox Christian theology is that people were created in the image of God, an image imprinted by connection with God and with others. Humans have been alienated from God, and therefore alienated from others. Often humans fail to relate to one another in wholeness and truth. In reading Ferch's book and seeing his own exploration of forgiveness, dialogue, wholeness, and love, it is striking that there is a deep lived application of this theological principal in servant-leadership.

Greenleaf's own Quaker beliefs are seen in the innate value he places on others. Quaker founder George Fox presented all people as having the capacity for good and said, "walk cheerfully over the earth answering that of Go(o)d in everyone" (Nielsen 1998, 135). Fox's quote points to the theology that people are created in the image of God and that they are good because God is good. While the current dominant culture in the United States is built on much fear and distrust, the idea that everyone is worthy, no matter how much their worthiness or goodness may appear hidden, is countercultural. In fact, it is the dominant culture that Quakers recognize as lying at the core of many of our behavioral and value problems. There are entanglements between the behavior and values choices people make and their own innate goodness (Nielsen, 136). Greenleaf's Quaker background is a part of servant-leadership because the servant-leader seeks to understand the underlying humanity and innate creative and good spirit of an individual, which then leads to freedom and health.

As a forgiveness studies researcher and writer, Ferch presents the limitations of forgiveness as an element of our alienation from others. He makes the case that unless we actually consciously think about forgiveness, it does not come to mind as one communicates or solves problems. "We don't often think of forgiveness; when we do we often resist the idea: when we cease our resistance, we may think *maybe I need to forgive someone*" (46), and there the progression may stop. If the process goes further, then one reaches Ferch's fourth ground, where one affirms the need to ask for forgiveness. From this point, one is humbled, asks forgiveness, and ultimately changes because of the awareness of how one's own actions created a breach in relationship.

While this process of understanding the need for forgiveness is critical to building relationships with others, it is difficult because people are in



a position of vulnerability when they seek forgiveness from others. Ferch also builds on the role of grace. Grace bridges the gap between the hurt people cause each other and the idea that forgiveness is not an entitlement. It is grace that reconciles relationships. “From self-responsible living, grace draws near, and from grace rises the ability to forgive others, to face the atrocities done to us or our loved ones, and not only embrace the violent heart of humanity, but also see the heart of humanity whole, healed and strong again” (30). From being conscious about forgiveness and one’s own role in a broken relationship, one can take steps to reconcile and present oneself as fully human to others.

While the words *leadership* and *servant* are important for people to define and conceptualize, the word at the heart of servant-leadership in *Forgiveness and Power* is “love.” Love is the overwhelming answer to the “why” of grace-filled forgiveness, the need for resolution that Havel calls for.

Part of the difficulty of discussing love is that it is often considered a romantic emotion, something only addressed in close interpersonal relationships. However, servant-leadership has a different understanding of love. “Love has probably been discussed more than any other word in history. And yet, it is so little understood. Love is a powerful, healing, renewing, and fulfilling emotion” (Batten 1998, 50). Love, as applied in servant-leadership as seen throughout Ferch’s work, is the same sort of powerful, driving love that Martin Luther King, Jr., (1963) makes an argument for in *Strength to Love*. King discusses freedom and overcoming oppression through “a proper self-love and a properly propositioned love of others” (118). The love at the heart of servanthood is “not soft, anemic, and sentimental. Such love confronts evil without flinching and shows in our popular parlance an infinite capacity ‘to take it’” (119). Batten (1998) calls love “the toughest-minded emotion in the world and the finest mental and spiritual nutrient you can possess for a total life of fulfillment and actualization” (51). This is the love that Ferch ultimately focuses on in his work and what he presents in his thoughts on Greenleaf’s original ideas. “In a world fraught with atrocity, love endures. Love heals. Power, in the context of love, is not power over others or the power to enforce, but power with others and power for others” (7). Even in the stark discussions of humanity’s worst choices and oppressions, the way out of the darkness remains the heart of love in servant-leadership. In times of evil “comes the fragrance of love. Love, not so much sweet and kindly as wild and revolutionary, evokes its own deeper justice that cannot be legislated or controlled” (35). When faced with violence and oppression, people



are bound to call for justice. The justice that comes from love may not be the justice that is expected. Love produces something richer, as hope and restoration grow out forgiveness.

#### CONCLUSION

The book's final section focuses on lived examples of servant-leadership shown through stories of hope, growth, and forgiveness. "In servant-leadership, the listener becomes a person who sees more clearly his or her own faults, works diligently to overcome them, and understands then how to bring healing to others" (Ferch 2012, 139). In the end, in *Forgiveness and Power*, narrative paints a picture of what can happen when people dig into the rich soil of their lives. Ferch uses the participants' words to honor them and give them voice, again modeling servant-leadership in his literature choices. Readers are asked to embrace their own pain and darkness to better understand the surrounding world and the need to serve others to heal the world. "The atrocities of human conflict seem literally to beg for hiddenness, silence, deceit, and denial, but the realm of truth is a realm of voice, and by giving voice to the pain and suffering endured in atrocity we see again the human will not just to survive but to be fully alive and restored to the best sense of ourselves" (142). Ferch revisits Spear's ten characteristics of servant-leadership, but does so in light of the deep exploration of self, consciousness, and forgiveness in the lives of common people and those more recognized, all of whom are beacons of servant-leadership.

Richard Holloway (2002) described a celebration of the need to "actively say yes to the tragic reality of life, including the facts of pain and loss" (43). Ferch shows the life reflections and choices of those who have chosen to actively say "yes" and move through the pain to embrace authenticity. Love in action is the foundation for overcoming oppression. The active "yes" that lies at the heart of *Forgiveness and Power in the Age of Atrocity* is a "yes" to our own humanity, and our will to transcend evil through love. The imagery and the thoughts presented in Ferch's writing are haunting and powerful and require much heart and courage. Atrocities strike the reader to the core, and Ferch uses this intriguing lens to examine servant-leadership in a way that produces an investigation of a leader's own thoughts and actions. By understanding the process of listening, dialogue, and action based in love, the servant-leader brings love, forgiveness, and healing to others.



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