



2017 Q2 Feed My Sheep 1st and 2nd Peter Lesson 7 – Servant Leadership

Leadership is a hot topic – leaders in business, leaders in government, church leaders, team leaders. There are countless books written on the topic every year, tons of classes and seminars taught on how to be a good leader. In fact, I put just the word “leadership” in Amazon’s book search engine and it returned 184,106 titles.

So what makes a good leader?

Are there consistent traits or qualities that effective leaders have in common?

How can we tell who is – or who will be – an effective leader?

Think about maybe people you have worked for or others who have struck you as good leaders. What are some of the common characteristics of successful leaders?

- Vision
- Communication
- Inspiration
- Innovation

These days on social media, if you like someone’s Instagram and don’t want to miss any of their photos...what do you do? If you happen to participate in the social media sewer known as Twitter, and you don’t want to miss someone’s asinine tweets, what do you do?

You *FOLLOW* them!

Instagram queen, Selena Gomez, has 118 million “followers”...does this make her an effective leader? Katy Perry has 97,298,907 Twitter followers...is she a good leader?

I have also known people in my life who were able to communicate a vision and inspire folks in such a way that they would quit their jobs, pack up their families, and move across the country in order to keep working for these leaders.

Is having followers or people being willing to follow necessarily an indication of strong leadership skills?



We will talk more specifically about Servant Leadership in Tuesday's lesson, and whether a servant leader exhibits different qualities...but this week's lesson tends to focus exclusively on the importance of these leadership traits in "church" leadership – the church proper, the organized, institutional, bureaucratic, political church. Sometimes, nothing can reduce the selfless and servant posture from folks like a little organizational power and prestige can...right? Even if it doesn't start out that way.

SUNDAY

Elders in the Early Church

So, let's revisit the history and context of who Peter is addressing here in his letter, and what is happening at the time. These are brand new churches, the apostles are evangelizing like crazy, the Holy Spirit is moving, new members and new churches are being added all the time, and the needs became overwhelming pretty quickly.

- So this rapid growth is a great problem to have – lots of churches would love to be able to say, “man, we just have too much growth...we are just adding too many members.” But the early church rapidly outgrew the apostle's ability to manage it effectively, and there were logistical issues, growing pains, and a real need for more defined structure in the organization.
- They had multiple ethnicities, cultures, nationalities coming together...but each with significant differences in traditions, beliefs, and practices (sound familiar?)...in fact, this first controversy or issue that arose was based on one group's perception that they were being discriminated against by the other groups.
- So these first elders were selected and ordained to handle some of the administrative, logistical, and organizational needs of the new churches, so that those who were preaching and evangelizing, and spreading the gospel would not be sidetracked or hindered by those tasks that were not the best use of their time or skills.
- These elders were given many different roles in early Christianity – they helped establish more structure in their local congregations. And since many were already leaders of their local communities, they sometimes acted as teachers, as preachers, and they ensured that the needs and well-being of their communities were being met.

In the teachers section, there is actually a distinction made between the roles of deacons and elders. Although the apostles were the early church's first leaders, Acts 6:1-6 describes the earliest attempt to draft additional leaders to share the organizational and structural responsibilities more effectively. These men were later called deacons, which mean those who minister to the needs of others. Subsequently, the apostles also found a need to appoint spiritual leaders in each church congregation and these men were known as elders, literally, older men of age and experience. The apostles were itinerant (traveling/roving) leaders, while the elders were local church leaders, and the deacons helped provide organizational and administrative support.



MONDAY

The Elders

Peter gives some instruction to the new elders and church leaders in 1 Peter 5:1-4:

“To the pastors and teachers among you, I call on you as a fellow pastor and teacher who witnessed Christ’s sufferings, and one who will also share in the glorious re-creation to be revealed: Protect God’s flock selflessly, like loving shepherds, serving as guides and guardians—not out of obligation or requirement, but freely—as God designed for you to do. Watch over it willingly, not seeking reward or payment, but eager to serve others; not like dictators exercising power and authority over those entrusted to their care, but modeling servant-leadership to your flock. Then, when the Chief Shepherd returns, you will be crowned with the glory of Christ’s perfection that will never fade away.”

Peter calls himself a fellow elder, pastor, and teacher when he gives this advice...do you think maybe it comes from a place of his personal experience?

Are there ways for these principles to apply to each of us, regardless of our roles in or out of the church?

Many times in the New Testament Jesus is referred to in the role of shepherd, the Good Shepherd, in our previous text as the Chief Shepherd. So, it is interesting that Peter, in this text, likens the role of an elder to a shepherd tending God’s flock.

What does that lead us to conclude about the significance of the role of elders in the church?

Are they literally tasked with being Christ’s representatives or envois to his church here on earth?

With that in mind, what are some of the qualities listed in the lesson that make good elder material? You will see many parallels to the effective leadership traits we discussed earlier.

- Patience (as a shepherd with his sheep)
- Humble, willing and eager to serve – no compulsion, guilt (nominating committee time), manipulation
- Nurturers and overseers
- Ready to function as examples rather than dictators
- Spiritual maturity, fully understood God’s methods and principles of love so they could foster the spiritual development of each new congregation



TUESDAY

Servant Leadership

What is servant leadership? How is it different from regular leadership we have been discussing? Well, another Google search yielded many of the same qualities and characteristics...along with some that weren't previously mentioned – traits like “person of character”, “puts others first”, “compassionate collaborator”, “leads with moral authority”, “empathy/healing”, “stewardship”, “builds community”.

Is there a common theme running through all of these? Selflessness!

Is there any doubt why Jesus was the quintessential servant leader?

For me, nothing illustrates the servant leadership concept better than the picture of Jesus we get a glimpse of in John 13:3-4 (this is from *The Remedy*):

“Jesus knew that his Father had placed all things—whether in heaven or on earth—in his hands, and that he had come from God to reveal him and was returning to God when his mission was complete. So in order to give his disciples a further revelation of God, he got up from his meal, took off his outer garment, and wrapped a towel around his waist. Then poured water in a bowl and began to wash the dirty feet of his disciples, drying them with the towel that was tied around him.”

What a beautiful picture, right? Especially when we remember that two of those feet were about to betray him.

Mrs. White expands on this story in her book, *The Desire of Ages*, but again we need to make sure we have a good grasp of the context and setting, and the recent events that took place right before the last supper. If you remember, the disciples were bickering amongst themselves, jockeying for position in Christ's kingdom, and the mother of the sons of thunder had just asked Jesus to put her two sons at his right and left hand! Think that caused any conflict? Here is what *The Desire of Ages* says about that encounter:

“Jesus bears tenderly with them, not rebuking their selfishness in seeking preference above their brethren. He reads their hearts, He knows the depth of their attachment to Him. Their love is not a mere human affection; though defiled by the earthliness of its human channel, it is an outflowing from the fountain of His own redeeming love. He will not rebuke, but deepen and purify.” DA 548



So based on that bit of background here is what she says about Christ's act of servant leadership:

“Another cause of dissension had arisen (other than the bickering and the brothers). At a feast it was customary for a servant to wash the feet of the guests, and on this occasion preparation had been made for the service. The pitcher, the basin, and the towel were there, in readiness for the feet washing; but no servant was present, and it was the disciples' part to perform it. But each of the disciples, yielding to wounded pride, determined not to act the part of a servant. All manifested a stoical unconcern, seeming unconscious that there was anything for them to do. By their silence they refused to humble themselves. – {DA 644.2}

How was Christ to bring these poor souls where Satan would not gain over them a decided victory? How could He show that a mere profession of discipleship did not make them disciples, or insure them a place in His kingdom? How could He show that it is loving service, true humility, which constitutes real greatness? How was He to kindle love in their hearts, and enable them to comprehend what He longed to tell them? – {DA 644.3}

The disciples made no move toward serving one another. Jesus waited for a time to see what they would do. Then He, the divine Teacher, rose from the table. Laying aside the outer garment that would have impeded His movements, He took a towel, and girded Himself. With surprised interest the disciples looked on, and in silence waited to see what was to follow. “After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.” This action opened the eyes of the disciples. Bitter shame and humiliation filled their hearts. They understood the unspoken rebuke, and saw themselves in altogether a new light. – {DA 644.4}

So Christ expressed His love for His disciples. Their selfish spirit filled Him with sorrow, but He entered into no controversy with them regarding their difficulty. Instead He gave them an example they would never forget. His love for them was not easily disturbed or quenched. He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and went to God. He had a full consciousness of His divinity; but He had laid aside His royal crown and kingly robes, and had taken the form of a servant. One of the last acts of His life on earth was to gird Himself as a servant, and perform a servant's part. – {DA 644.5}

Before the Passover Judas had met a second time with the priests and scribes, and had closed the contract to deliver Jesus into their hands. Yet he afterward mingled with the disciples as though innocent of any wrong, and interested in the work of preparing for the feast. The disciples knew nothing of the purpose of Judas. Jesus alone could read his secret. Yet He did not expose him. Jesus hungered for his soul. He felt for him such a burden as for Jerusalem



when He wept over the doomed city. His heart was crying, How can I give thee up? The constraining power of that love was felt by Judas. When the Saviour's hands were bathing those soiled feet, and wiping them with the towel, the heart of Judas thrilled through and through with the impulse then and there to confess his sin. But he would not humble himself. He hardened his heart against repentance; and the old impulses, for the moment put aside, again controlled him. Judas was now offended at Christ's act in washing the feet of His disciples. If Jesus could so humble Himself, he thought, He could not be Israel's king. All hope of worldly honor in a temporal kingdom was destroyed. Judas was satisfied that there was nothing to be gained by following Christ. After seeing Him degrade Himself, as he thought, he was confirmed in his purpose to disown Him, and confess himself deceived. He was possessed by a demon, and he resolved to complete the work he had agreed to do in betraying his Lord.”
– {DA 645.1}

I know this is a long quote, but I was so intrigued and touched by these insights that I wanted to share it...and hearing this description of Judas' reaction reminded me of a little bit of Come and Reason history.

Some of you may remember in the very early days of our ministry, before we were Come and Reason, there were a group of folks who would get together and speak on God's character of love called The Good News Tour...anyone remember?

Well, they came up is a startling illustration reenacting the scene just described, but Jesus was washing the feet of George W. Bush, Kofi Anan, Osama Bin Laden, and others. They used it on marketing materials to advertise their events, but it turned out to be quite a controversial lightning rod. Many folks characterized the image as offensive – Christian denominations, non-Christian denominators, veterans – all demanded that flyers be removed and posters be taken down.



Why do you think this image caused so much controversy...any ideas?

I definitely did a double-take when I first saw it...it made me a bit uncomfortable and caused a bit of cognitive dissonance. Maybe it's easier to read John's account of Jesus washing the feet of both his friends and his enemies, filtered through the lens of our comfortable biases and prejudices and our interpretation of whose feet he *should* wash...and whose he shouldn't...than it is to see it laid out in a shocking, realistic, too-close-to-home illustration?



Why would this image of the Servant God cause such a visceral, some might say Judas-like, reaction in people?

I think the reason and the discomfort comes from both sides of the equation...or the stage. One of the reasons veterans strongly objected to the poster was the portrayal of Osama Bin Laden on equal footing with the president and the former secretary of state. If you notice, all of the folks being served are on the same level in this picture.

Have you ever heard the saying that the ground is level at the foot of the cross? Aren't we all terminal and in need of Christ's healing, saving remedy? And isn't his desire and willingness to serve and heal and save equal for all who are willing to receive it? The other source of discomfort may come from the picture of *God* portrayed here...and I say that purposely. Some might actually be able to accept Jesus in this picture and in this servant role, but have trouble interposing God the father in his place...but if Jesus and the Father are one, and if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father, then isn't that exactly what we are seeing in the picture?

Maybe if you are waiting with baited breath for God to come back in glory and triumph and punish His (and your) enemies, then you are uncomfortable with and do not want to see a picture of him serving those enemies in love and humility? This is at the heart of the imposed law construct that has infected the vast majority of Christianity, and it's preventing hearts and minds and lives from being transformed by God's spirit of truth and love.

Continuing on with the quote –

“Judas, in choosing his position at table, had tried to place himself first, and Christ as a servant served him first. John, toward whom Judas had felt so much bitterness, was left till the last. But John did not take this as a rebuke or slight. As the disciples watched Christ's action, they were greatly moved. When Peter's turn came, he exclaimed with astonishment, “Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?” Christ's condescension broke his heart. He was filled with shame to think that one of the disciples was not performing this service. “What I do,” Christ said, “thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” Peter could not bear to see his Lord, whom he believed to be the Son of God, acting the part of a servant. His whole soul rose up against this humiliation. He did not realize that for this Christ came into the world. With great emphasis he exclaimed, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” – {DA 645.2}

Solemnly Christ said to Peter, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.” The service which Peter refused was the type of a higher cleansing. Christ had come to wash the heart from the stain of sin. In refusing to allow Christ to wash his feet, Peter was refusing the higher



cleansing included in the lower. He was really rejecting his Lord. **It is not humiliating to the Master to allow Him to work for our purification. The truest humility is to receive with thankful heart any provision made in our behalf, and with earnestness do service for Christ.** – {DA 646.1}

At the words, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me,” Peter surrendered his pride and self-will. He could not endure the thought of separation from Christ; that would have been death to him. “Not my feet only,” he said, “but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” – {DA 646.2}

These words mean more than bodily cleanliness. Christ is still speaking of the higher cleansing as illustrated by the lower. He who came from the bath was clean, but the sandaled feet soon became dusty, and again needed to be washed. So Peter and his brethren had been washed in the great fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Christ acknowledged them as His. But temptation had led them into evil, and they still needed His cleansing grace. When Jesus girded Himself with a towel to wash the dust from their feet, He desired by that very act to wash the alienation, jealousy, and pride from their hearts. This was of far more consequence than the washing of their dusty feet. With the spirit they then had, not one of them was prepared for communion with Christ. Until brought into a state of humility and love, they were not prepared to partake of the paschal supper, or to share in the memorial service which Christ was about to institute. Their hearts must be cleansed. Pride and self-seeking create dissension and hatred, but all this Jesus washed away in washing their feet. A change of feeling was brought about. Looking upon them, Jesus could say, “Ye are clean.” Now there was union of heart, love for one another. They had become humble and teachable. Except Judas, each was ready to concede to another the highest place. Now with subdued and grateful hearts they could receive Christ’s words. – {DA 646.3}

The 4th paragraph says Peter, “goes on to explain that a key difference between His kingdom and those of the Gentile nations is the type of leader that will emerge in His kingdom.”

When I read that I said yep, that is *a* key difference...but it is a product or an outgrowth of *the* key difference.

What is the key difference between God’s kingdom and earthly kingdoms?

Imposed law versus design law!



“Those who wish to lead in the kingdom where Jesus is King must become servants because the leaders in Jesus’ kingdom will be like Jesus”

very well said! Thus, Peter is calling church leaders to the same ideal: the surrender and self-denial seen in Jesus must be revealed in them, as well.

The box at the bottom of Tuesday’s lesson points out how closely Paul’s writing in Phil 2:4-8 coincides with Peter’s instructions to church leaders. From The Message:

“If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.”

WEDNESDAY

Clothed in Humility

Does being clothed in humility seem counterintuitive to being a leader?

Is being described as “humble” a compliment or an insult?

Wednesday’s lesson describes the “stratified” class system that existed in the ancient world in Peter’s day. There was a “ruling elite” class that had what might be called a commanding presence. The so-called middle class was likely non-existent, leaving various groups of the lower class all the way down to the lowest rank of all – the slave – and the Greek word for “humility” described the proper attitude for those of lower rank to have toward those of a higher one.

This same Greek word means lowly, insignificant, weak, poor, and describes people with no power or status in society. In the world outside of Judaism and Christianity, the word “humble” was associated with those of low status, and to act humbly would not necessarily have been commended as



appropriate conduct or a compliment. But isn't it interesting that "confidence combined with humility" is listed as a common factor in successful servant leadership?

So Peter's advice in chapter 5 versus 5-7 was a bit counterculture for the time, and still is. The Remedy says:

"Young people, respectfully listen to the counsel of those who are older, and follow their wise leadership. But all of you – old and young alike – treat each other with humble and loving service, because 'God is the opposite of self-exaltation, and his very nature opposes pridefulness; he pours his healing power into the humble.' Therefore, surrender yourselves under God's almighty healing hand that he might restore you, uplifting you to his ideal in due time. Pour out your worries, frustrations, and burdens upon him, because he cares for you."

Another quote from one of the founders of our church giving instruction to pastors and church leaders says,

"To succeed as Jesus succeeded, lead humbly as Jesus led—Jesus, the dear Saviour, has given marked lessons in humility to all, but especially to the gospel minister. In His humiliation, when His work upon earth was nearly finished and He was about to return to His Father's throne whence He had come, with all power in His hands and all glory upon His head, among His last lessons to His disciples was one upon the importance of humility. While His disciples were contending as to who should be greatest in the promised kingdom, He girded Himself as a servant and washed the feet of those who called Him Lord and Master." {PaM 284.2}

Wednesday's lesson concludes,

"Sure, anyone could be humble before God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Also, it's relatively easy to be humble before those who are above us, who have power over us, and who are 'higher' in status than we are. The true test comes when we reveal humility toward those who are 'under' us, who have no power over us. That's the kind of humility Peter is talking about here."

One more quote on Christ's humility from Sons and Daughters of God:

"In consenting to become man, Christ manifested a humility that is the marvel of the heavenly intelligences. The act of consenting to be a man would be no humiliation were it not for the fact of Christ's exalted pre-existence. We must open our understanding to realize that Christ laid aside his royal robe, His kingly crown, His high command, and clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might meet man where he was, and bring to the human family moral power to become the sons and daughters of God. The meekness and humility that characterized the



life of Christ will be made manifest in the life and character of those who ‘walk even as he walked’.” {81}

THURSDAY

Like a Roaring Lion

So we have already discussed the context of Peter’s writing – he wrote against the backdrop of persecution. The lesson says, “The great controversy theme wasn’t just abstract theology to his readers;” they were experiencing it for reals, up close and personal, in a way that most of us have not, at least for now. There was no doubt a war going on for the hearts and minds of those new Christian converts, just as there is a war going on today for our hearts and minds.

Revelation 12:7-9 talks about how that war started and the origin of evil:

⁷There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought using truth and love against the lies and deceptions of the dragon, but the dragon and his angels fought back against the truth, spreading more lies about God and Jesus, his Son.⁸But his lies were not strong enough, and they lost their place of esteem and respect in heaven:⁹The great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan that leads the entire world away from God and his methods of love—was cast out of the hearts, minds and affections of the loyal beings in heaven. He and his angels were cast to the earth—the only place in the universe where beings still believe his lies about God.”

The end of the second paragraph says,

“Yet, the good news is that the devil will ultimately be destroyed in the end.”

Is that really the good news?

What is implied in that statement?

We are living in enemy territory. Lions are stealthy, they stalk their prey by keeping hidden until the sudden last-minute attack. Watch a little NatGeo Wild if you are unsure. Lions might toy with their prey, but they have one goal in mind. Satan is subtle, and stealthy, and wise. He knows our weaknesses – maybe better than we do – and he knows the best ways to exploit them. We might not be aware of the danger unless we remain alert, clear minded, and self-controlled. We are also told to “resist him, standing firm in the faith” and he will flee.

What steps can we take to be alert, clear minded, and self-controlled?

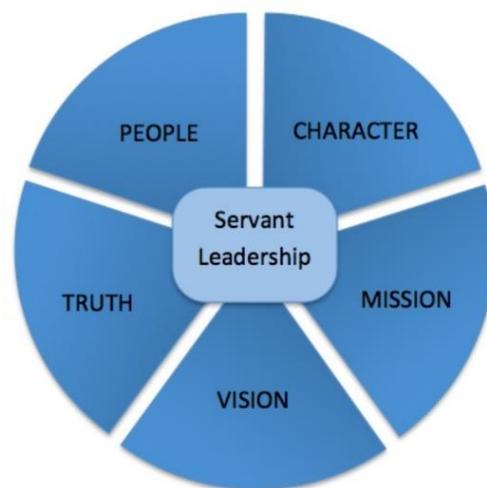
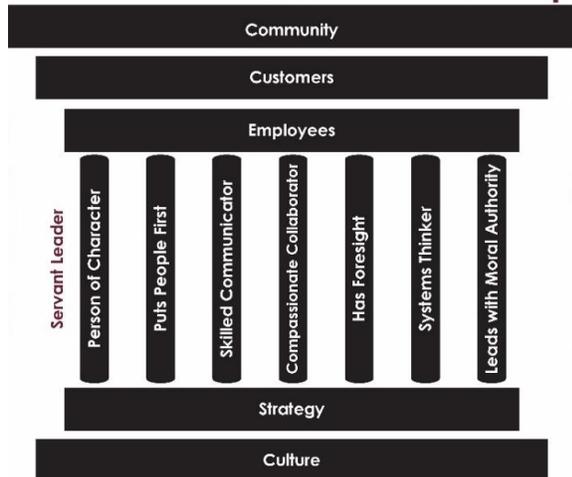


Sin damages, sin destroys, and the devil doesn't want to just cause you or your loved ones pain, heartache, or make you cry. He wants nothing less than to destroy you, and destroy as many of God's children as he can. Yes, the devil is real. The battle is real, our sufferings are real. But the "God of all grace" has overcome the world...has defeated him who holds the power of death – the devil. So whatever we are suffering, if we remain faithful – even unto death – victory is assured.

Discussion question: How would you answer the claim that Satan is not real but just a symbol of the evil found in human nature?



Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership



11 THEMES OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

CALLING

DO PEOPLE BELIEVE YOU ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE SELF INTEREST FOR THE GOOD OF THE GROUP?

AWARENESS

DO OTHERS BELIEVE YOU HAVE A STRONG AWARENESS FOR WHAT IS GOING ON?

STEWARDSHIP

DO OTHERS BELIEVE YOU ARE PREPARING THE ORGANIZATION TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE?

LISTENING

DO PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT YOU WANT TO HEAR THEIR IDEAS AND WILL VALUE THEM?

PERSUASION

DO OTHERS FOLLOW YOUR REQUEST BECAUSE THEY WANT TO AS OPPOSED TO BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO?

GROWTH

DO PEOPLE BELIEVE YOU ARE COMMITTED TO HELPING THEM GROW AND DEVELOP?

EMPATHY

DO PEOPLE BELIEVE YOU WILL UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THEIR LIVES AND HOW IT AFFECTS THEM?

FORESIGHT

DO OTHERS HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITY TO ANTICIPATE THE FUTURE AND CONSEQUENCES?

COMMUNITY BUILDING

DO PEOPLE FEEL A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN THE ORGANIZATION YOU LEAD?

HEALING

DO PEOPLE COME TO YOU WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN OR WHEN SOMETHING TRAUMATIC HAS HAPPENED IN THEIR LIVES?

CONCEPTUALIZATION

DO OTHERS COMMUNICATE THEIR IDEAS AND VISION FOR THE ORGANIZATION WHEN YOU ARE AROUND?

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