

# The Good & Faithful Servant

## A SAMPLE “GO FORTH” INITIATIVE

Are you looking for God to get a good return on the talents He entrusted you with? Are you interested in applying certain talents to make a positive impact in the 24/7, high-tech, rapid fire information age? Do you have the talents necessary? Have a look at the following categories and I’m sure you’ll agree with me that you do:

### THE LISTENER

Sure, you may typically find yourself replicating thoughts, struggling with problem-solving without direct input, and relying heavily on existing scripts or models. But you’re very good at acquiring new knowledge and insights from others. You find joy in building stronger relationships by showing respect and empathy for others, improving communication and fostering better problem-solving skills. Well done!

### THE CURATOR

You’ve got a thing for making connections and digesting tomes of information – aggregating, compiling, summarizing and redistributing the content produced by others – making it easily accessible to an expanded audience. Your talent is not necessarily creation, it’s dissemination. You act as a megaphone for existing ideas and share them with other people to help them grow. Worthy role!

### THE BEACON

You’re most comfortable doing, thinking and building in public. You may not yet be an established expert, but don’t get discouraged. There are plenty of scrappy beacons who are just starting out and sharing what they learn along the way. As a beacon, you’re used to generously sharing your expertise, guidance, advice and perspective on a regular basis. Thanks for being a shining example!

### THE CHALLENGER

You’re not just a consumer of information. You generate original insights, challenge conventional wisdom, push back on the status quo, give us new ways to think about old ideas, and shape the conversation. Why? Because you ask “why” a lot. And because of that, your expertise is often sought after. You’re not just a thought leader, you’re a pioneer with grit!

Now that you’ve had some time to think about it, are you ready to improve yourself as a listener, curator, beacon and/or challenger – and make a bigger impact? If “yes,” then here’s some other things you may want to consider:

## The Good & Faithful Servant *(continued)*

### TIPS FOR BECOMING A BETTER LISTENER

Ready to build more trust, foster empathy, strengthen relationships, prevent misunderstandings and improve your overall communications? Who doesn't, right?!

Listening is obviously a powerful way to learn and grow, but it also signals to other people that you value their perspectives, and leads to more supportive, connected, and collaborative relationships. When people feel heard, it fosters a genuine sense of mutual respect, and helps you better understand another person's point of view, leading to more empathetic responses.

- **Active listening.** This requires giving your full attention to the speaker and showing that you're engaged in the conversation. Maintain eye contact. Use nonverbal cues to demonstrate your interest. Show an interest in the person and in what they are saying. Also, try paraphrasing what is said to be sure you understand.
- **Validation.** Acknowledge the speaker's feelings and emotions by letting them know that you understand and accept their emotional experience, even if you don't necessarily agree with their perspective. This could be in a situation where the other person is "overreacting" in your opinion. Respect them even if you don't agree with them.
- **Empathy.** Put yourself in the speaker's shoes and walking in those shoes by trying to understand their point of view. Empathize with their emotions and show compassion for their experiences. You may not feel exactly the way they do but you can show consideration for their feelings because they can appear as facts to the person experiencing them.
- **Avoid interruption.** Resist the urge to interrupt or interject your thoughts and opinions while the other person is talking. Allow them to express themselves fully before responding. Try to listen with the intent to understand, not to reply.
- **Reflective listening.** This technique mirrors the speaker's thoughts and emotions and shows you are making an effort to understand. Try paraphrasing what they've said to confirm that you've understood correctly. "What I'm hearing is..."
- **Open-ended questions.** Asking these questions allows for greater engagement and encourage the speaker to share more detailed responses. These questions can prompt more meaningful conversations and opportunities to gain more insight and understanding.
- **Nonjudgmental attitude.** Create a nonjudgmental and accepting atmosphere where the speaker feels safe sharing their thoughts and feelings. Avoid criticizing or immediately offering solutions.
- **Patience.** It can be tough to listen to someone rambling on, but if we truly want to be good listeners, we should exercise enough patience to let the speaker articulate their thoughts without interruption.



## The Good & Faithful Servant *(continued)*

- **Don't fix everything.** Avoid the tendency to jump in with advice or solutions. People often just need someone to listen and validate their feelings. Not every problem requires an immediate solution.
- **Summarize and clarify.** Periodically in a conversation, summarize what the speaker has said to ensure you understand, and ask for clarification if something is unclear. This demonstrates that you are interested and committed to understanding their message.

### TIPS FOR BECOMING A BETTER CURATOR

The more news and information proliferates at our fingertips, the more difficult it is to find trustworthy content that is both relevant and useful. If you're curating stuff in the same channels on a regular basis, take your role seriously to be credible, and don't assume readers are interested in the same topics you are. Know your audience!

- **Priority 1: Add unique value.** Simply sharing a link without adding your own commentary, insights, analysis, or context does little to distinguish you from an automated news feed. Remember, your unique perspective is what defines you as a curator.
- **Prioritize quality over quantity.** This is particularly relevant to folks who like to curate in comments sections or IM threads, self-appointed or otherwise. Do not overshare or bombard your audience with too much content. Focus on hand-picking only the most relevant and valuable information to prevent dilution and overload.
- **Avoid low-quality or sensationalist sources.** Be selective and only curate content from reputable, authoritative, and vetted news outlets and experts. Avoid sources that thrive on negativity, clickbait, or unverified claims.
- **Define objectives and audience needs.** Have a coherent strategy or understanding of what your audience wants or needs. Your curation efforts should be guided by specific goals and an understanding of the audience's interests.
- **Check dates.** Why share outdated information? Ensure the content you curate is timely and relevant to current discussions and trends.
- **Be consistent.** Inconsistent posting, or a wavering, flip-flopping voice can lead to a loss in interest and engagement.
- **To automate or not?** While certain tools can help in content discovery, manually review and fine-tune your selection to ensure quality, relevance, and a human touch.
- **Engage with the audience.** Curation is a two-way street. Encourage discussion, ask questions, and interact with your audience to help grow and edify healthy relationships leveraging the information you provide.

A good curator is responsible for not only adding positively to the audience experience, but the host organization's mission as well – not detracting from it. Too much curated content lacks any original voice. Strive to be deliberate, prudent, and always mission focused.



## The Good & Faithful Servant *(continued)*

### TIPS FOR BECOMING A BETTER THOUGHT LEADER (CURATORS, BEACONS AND CHALLENGERS)

So you like to think in public about your work... are you also the type who likes to question everything and shake things up? If so, you've got the makings to be a dynamic thought leader and positive force for good, provided you present solutions along with your critiques.

Thought leaders are generally great at sharing what they know, how they learned it, and what's coming next. Beacons as thought leaders are particularly good at leading the way forward.

Challengers tend to get a great deal of attention, especially on social media and other interactive platforms. They can be fun and exciting, but they can also be brash and controversial. They're disruptors. They stir the pot — which can be a good thing in a world where there are so many pots that need stirring. Challengers question norms, push back on the status quo, and ask, "why?" They give us new ideas that help spur other ideas.

There's a caveat, though. If you're just blowing things up, poking holes in tired and uninspired ways, and lobbing critique bombs, you're not a leader. You're an instigator. You're only doing part of the work necessary for effective thought leadership.

To be a thought leader, you have to show people a new way forward. It's fine and well to critique the old ways, but thought leaders bear the solemn responsibility of offering a solution. In order to be this kind of thought leader you're going to have to... well, lead.

The most effective challengers close the circle. They question a norm and offer a new solution:

- The old way stinks!  
**[What if we tried this new way?]**
- I'm so tired of this fruitless method!  
**[Here's an experiment I'm trying at the organization to shake things up.]**
- Did you see this horrific thing?  
**[I'm actually doing X, Y & Z to combat, alleviate, and hopefully eliminate it.]**

In closing, remember this:

*"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."*

-- Winston Churchill

